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Make Your Data Center A 24/7 Operation

How To Keep It Running All Day, All Night & Then Some

by David Garrett

• • •

24/7. They're magic numbers. Add 365 to the mix, as in 24/7/365, or "five nines" or in "five nines" uptime, and you have the brass ring of IT management.

You also have a standard of service that's becoming standard itself. With traveling employees, a remote workforce, and a global Web presence, data centers that run all the time are becoming a commonplace in the enterprise.

They're also hard to manage. There are hardware, software, and personnel hurdles to jump, not to mention the maintenance and preventive measures that enter the picture, too.

More Power!

According to Stephen Dixon, vice president of operations for Enterprise Control Systems, the first step to total uptime is good power management. "You'll need to make sure your power is protected 24/7," he says.

Ideally, that means a UPS that can page or email you as soon as there's a problem. In fact, a UPS with messaging tops the 24/7 checklists of Dixon and other experts—but that's not to say that everyone listens.

"You'd be surprised at how many people have no monitoring of the UPS at all—or any of their critical infrastructure equipment," says Jim Weydman, president of 24/7 Technology. Weydman, an expert on power issues, has seen one too many disasters when the staff takes its eyes off the UPS. "They may have personnel in on

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Mobile Devices: Deal With Them Or Fall Behind

Are You Ready For Computing Mobility?

by Sixto Ortiz Jr.

• • •

Today's mobile devices, such as PDAs, cell phones, and converged devices, are more powerful than ever. The right device could propel the productivity of your traveling workers and help your business grow sales and capture new customers.

Naturally, your mobile users are eager to try these new toys. In many cases, power users anxious for increased mobility are the first ones to acquire these tools, with or without the blessing of corporate IT. The problem is especially daunting for CIOs and network administrators in small and medium-sized enterprises who already contend with limited staffing and resources. In these organizations, mobile device management is often overlooked. Mobile devices are a reality in today's IT landscape, so SMEs must make the effort to understand these devices and prepare their networks and IT infrastructures to accommodate them.

Naturally, your mobile users are eager to try these new toys.

The Mobile Computing Landscape

Users are increasingly demanding mobile devices that do it all, so converged devices that handle both data and voice communications are all the rage. According to IDC's Worldwide Handheld QView report for the first quarter of this year, handheld device shipments declined 12.1% year

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COVER FOCUS

The 24x7 Data Center

What does it take to run today's 24x7 data center? We take an in-depth look at the "9s" of availability and disaster recovery sites, including a discussion of how to replace lost resources and whether your recovery site should be hot, warm, or cold.

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Mobile devices are a reality in today's IT landscape, so small to midsized enterprises must make the effort to prepare their networks and infrastructures to accommodate them.

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While you may not have the budget to have a full-time technical writer on staff, you can always outsource technical writing to a contracting agency or independent technical writer.

A Removable Storage Policy | 30

Even employees with good intentions may misplace or have a removable storage device stolen.

Recovering Deleted Emails | 30

Two enterprise-level systems can help you recover lost messages, archiving them on the fly.

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■ **Alchemy Lab** introduced Remote Control Pro 2.0 for managing workstations and servers. ■ **Axiomtek** announced its NAS-104AW server appliance. ■ **IBM** introduced WebSphere DataStage TX 8.0. ■ **Innovativ** announced EdgeSAF, a scalable alternative to the desktop workstation. ■ **iQstor Networks** launched the native iSCSI iQ1250 Storage System. ■ **Minicom Advanced Systems** released the SmartRack 16, a rack drawer and multiport CAT 5 KVM switch all in one. ■ **TechnoRiver** released SmartCodeStudio, a new label design, barcode printing, and RFID encoding software suite. ■ **Tripp Lite's** Traveler 100BaseT Direct Plug-In Surge Suppressor is part of the company's Protect It! Notebook Computer Surge Suppressors line. ■ **Verari Systems'** new RM4205 rackmount server supports up to four Intel Xeon MP processors. ■ **Winternals'** Defrag Manager 4.0 is the latest version of its enterprise defragmentation software.

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- ☐ Less than 10
- ☐ 10 - 99
- ☐ 100 - 199
- ☐ 200 - 499
- ☐ 500 - 999
- ☐ 1,000+

2. How often do you purchase computer hardware/software?

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Bi-Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Quarterly
- ☐ Annually
- ☐ No Involvement

3. What is your annual computer hardware/ software purchasing budget?

- ☐ $0 - $9,999
- ☐ $10,000 - $24,999
- ☐ $25,000 - $49,999
- ☐ $50,000 - $99,999
- ☐ $100,000 - $249,999
- ☐ $250,000 - $499,999
- ☐ $500,000 - $999,000
- ☐ $1,000,000+

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September 13-14
Washington, D.C.
www.afei.org

Common Fall 2005 Conference
September 18-22
Orlando, Fla.
www.common.org

Government Technology Conference East 2005
September 19-22
Albany, N.Y.
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MarketPlace NEWS

Spyware Infects Eight Out Of 10 Enterprise PCs

ANTISPYWARE VENDOR Webroot released statistics that reveal 80% of corporate PCs are infected with unwanted software, be it spyware, adware, or a Trojan horse. Webroot found that, on average, enterprise PCs have 27 components of spyware on the hard drive—19% more than just last quarter. And spyware is becoming increasingly malicious. The higher spyware rates may be a result of increased pressure on spyware as a business. Webroot's CEO C. David Moll says, "Like any business, spyware developers are committed to increasing their profit margins by expanding their distribution channels, utilizing new products, and entering new markets."

Sarbox A Waste Of Time

A RECENT ONLINE POLL done by IBM user group Share showed that many IBM users (28%) expect compliance with Sarbox regulations will be a waste of IT resources. Other things cited by users as potentially wasteful were deployment of unproven technologies (23%), purchase of unneeded technologies (19%), continued support for outdated technologies (17%), external consultants (10%), and software upgrades (1%). According to the poll, trends expected to impact business computing include information security (31%), shortage of qualified enterprise-class IT professionals (17%), and the outsourcing of application development and maintenance (14%).

AMD Approaches Corporate Agreement

AMD IS CLOSING in on a long-held dream: a deal that would have Fortune 500 corporations using notebooks containing processors from AMD. Bar Mahony, AMD's division marketing manager for the mobile-business sector, says that a few large corporations are thinking of switching to HP's Compaq nx6125 laptop, which uses AMD's Turion processor. In the past, AMD's chips have gone into consumer rather than corporate computers. AMD also plans to launch an advertising campaign to promote its Opteron server chip and challenge Intel, its main rival, to a performance competition.

HP Continues Turnaround

HP HAD A GREAT THIRD QUARTER, with personal computer sales the highlight of the quarter, according to CEO Mark Hurd. Revenues from personal computers rose 8% from the previous year; notebook sales were up 21%. HP's overall revenue rose 10% during the third quarter, but because of several one-time charges, profit dropped dramatically, from 19 cents a share during the same quarter last year to 3 cents a share this year. The results marked a big milestone for HP: The third quarter is typically a slow time, and both Dell and Gateway recently announced declines in revenue.

Secure Computing Acquires CyberGuard

SECURE COMPUTING is buying rival CyberGuard for $295 million, an acquisition that will strengthen Secure Computing's position in two fast-growing areas of the security industry: unified threat and secure content management. Because Secure Computing and CyberGuard are direct rivals (both make firewalls, VPNs, and Web filtering apps), there will be some changes in product lineup, including new product offerings and branding changes; however, there is no roadmap for such changes at this time. The merger is expected to close in Q4.

Symantec To Buy Sygate

SECURITY GIANT SYMANTEC announced that it has agreed to buy Sygate Technologies, a company specializing in security compliance. Neither company disclosed the actual amount of the acquisition, but Symantec did say it paid cash. The purchase process will come to a close once the companies receive regulatory approval. Symantec has purchased numerous companies in the past few months, as the security market is seeing a trend of consolidation. Veritas, TurnTide, and Brightmail are among Symantec's latest acquisitions.

Germany Creates Central IT Security Plan

CITING A LACK OF COMMITMENT to IT security by many German companies, the German government launched its National Plan To Protect IT Infrastructures. The plan's three major goals include preventing attacks, responding quickly when attacks occur, and encouraging adoption of security practices. The government will create a Federal Office For Security In Information Technology that will work with IT security vendors and house an emergency response center.

Google Plans Second Stock Offering

ONE YEAR AFTER its IPO, Google announced plans to sell 14.2 million shares of stock. The company hopes to make $4 billion off the offering, money it says it will use for future acquisitions and capital expenses. Google denied having any merger agreements in the works. Google's share price has risen nearly threefold since its first IPO price ($85), thanks in part to the 300% increase in Q2 net income; however, the company warns that future growth may decline as the company matures and competition in the search engine marketplace increases.

Low Infection Rates For Latest Worm

ALTHOUGH HACKERS have released variants of the Zotob worm that attacked Win2000 systems last week, the rate of infection seems to be low and the damage relatively minor. Security experts say this shows that computer users are patching their systems more quickly and regularly and that Microsoft's effort to tighten security is working. However, a survey done by security firm Sophos showed that nearly 35% of respondents blame Microsoft for the recent worm attack, while 45% blame the virus writers and 20% blame system administrators for not keeping up with the security patches.

New Head Of Chip Design At AMD

AMD HAS HIRED Jeff VerHeul, the former head of the engineering and technology services unit at IBM, to fill the role of corporate vice president of silicon design at AMD. VerHeul will lead development of future AMD computing chips, which includes product roadmaps and design at engineering sites worldwide. IBM and AMD also expanded the existing technology development pact they have, agreeing to work on manufacturing techniques that use the 22- or 32-nanometer processes. AMD ranks second to Intel in the microprocessor market.

Sun Has DRM Plan, Looks For Partners

SUN RELEASED its open-source digital rights management plan, called Dream (DRM everywhere available). Dream is designed as an alternative to existing DRM schemes from both Microsoft and Apple. The technologies used by those two companies is focused on particular devices, so content downloaded from a site can't always be played on any device; Dream will work based on individuals, rather than devices. The success of Dream depends on the partners Sun can enlist, and the company says initial interest has been strong.

Torvalds Defends Linux Trademark

LINUX FOUNDER Linus Torvalds defended the call for companies to pay to sublicense the Linux trademark, saying the trademark defense is required by law and no one is making money from the sublicensing fees. In July, 90 Australian companies were sent a letter asking them to either stop using the Linux name or to pay a sublicensing fee of between $200 and $5,000. Open-source advocates claim Torvalds is simply trying to cash in on Linux's success and is being hypocritical by criticizing software patents while enforcing his own trademark.

WATCH THE STOCKS

This information provides a quick glimpse of current and historical stock prices and trends for 16 major companies in the technology market.

Company	Symbol	Year Ago	August 17 $	August 24 $	% change from previous week
Avaya	AV	$13.11	$9.91	$10.02	▲ 1.11%
BEA Systems	BEAS	$6.98	$9.28	$8.92	▼ 3.88%
Computer Associates	CA	$23.90	$26.79	$26.24	▼ 2.05%
Cisco Systems	CSCO	$19.32	$17.94	$17.52	▼ 2.34%
Dell	DELL	$35.34	$36.94	$35.38	▼ 4.22%
Electronic Data Systems	EDS	$19.07	$22.06	$22.10	▲ 0.18%
Google	GOOG	$106	$284.84	$282.57	▼ 0.8%
HP	HPQ	$18.10	$26.07	$26.72	▲ 2.49%
IBM	IBM	$85.07	$81.52	$81.32	▼ 0.25%
Intel	INTC	$21.95	$26.06	$25.53	▼ 2.03%
McAfee	MFE	$19.18	$30.26	$31.44	▲ 3.9%
Microsoft	MSFT	$27.55	$26.87	$26.81	▼ 0.22%
Oracle	ORCL	$10.40	$13.22	$12.95	▼ 2.04%
Red Hat Software	RHAT	$17.33	$14.34	$13.85	▼ 3.42%
Sun Microsystems	SUNW	$3.79	$3.63	$3.59	▼ 1.1%
Symantec	SYMC	N/A	$21.82	$20.15	▼ 7.65%

NOTE: This information is meant for reference only and should not be used as a basis for buy/sell decisions.

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Data Backup Services: The Luxury Of A Guarantee

Disk-To-Disk Is Currently Driving The Market

by Chris A. MacKinnon

• • •

EVERY SMALL to midsized enterprise has a recurring nightmare before backup time: A disaster wreaks havoc on the network, knocking out local backups with it. Things get uglier when offsite backups fail as well. This nightmare has been a reality for some, but these days data backup services are smarter, more affordable, and even faster, giving SMEs the confidence they need in times of emergency.

The Evolution

A recent Gartner report found that 93% of organizations that have experienced a significant data loss are out of business within five years. The good news, however, is that online backup services have evolved over the past few years. The current generation of online backup providers is easing customer concerns about security and reliability. With data backup services, failed backups and tape-drive implosions have become a thing of the past.

Christopher Furey, CEO at Savvy Networks, says the advantages of online data backup services outweigh those of traditional backup schemes. He says, "The biggest advantage to managed backup services is that the customer usually has a trained backup administrator assigned to ensure the nightly backup is completing successfully. The greater percentage of unmanaged systems are either infrequently backed up or improperly backed up. Since statistics show even 50% of properly backed up systems fail upon restore from tape, managed backup can really stack the odds of a successful recovery in the favor of the customer."

Data backup services are also easy on the SME pocketbook. They are a cost-effective alternative to traditional tape backup schemes without the expense of additional hardware, software, media, or manpower. Service providers, using existing IP bandwidth to support regular backups of data, are offering redundant storage, 24/7 monitoring, and support available as needed. Most service providers will offer standard features, but their services vary most in the ability to do hot backups of open databases, messaging services, and dynamic OS files.

Call In The Pros

Let's take a look at a few data backup service providers who rank at the top end of the solutions scale. First up is LiveVault, known for its remote-management capabilities and simplified Web-based interface, among other things.

InSync. LiveVault, a disk-to-disk backup and recovery solution provider, offers LiveVault InSync, an online backup and recovery service for SMEs. InSync automatically performs server backups on a continuous or a scheduled basis via broadband Internet connection. The solution compresses, encrypts, and transmits data to an onsite LiveVault TurboRestore appliance (optional) or to an offsite LiveVault data storage vault. InSync is a fully automated service, which eliminates the risk of human error.

InSync's setup only takes a couple minutes per server. LiveVault's Web management portal guides users through setting up agent software on the servers that will be backed up. Once the data in question is selected, the agent software performs a one-time full server backup, which is verified via email once completed.

Data recovery is slick as well. Users can log onto the LiveVault Web management portal from anywhere anytime and select the data to be restored and the location for restoration. This restoration process is initiated in seconds. InSync also minimizes bandwidth and provides continuous data protection by transferring only data that has changed since the last backup. The solution also uses security, including 256-bit AES encryption, SSL security, VPN tunneling, and digital certificates.

SNAPSHOT

LiveVault InSync

Starts at $119 per month for a 5GB server

An online tape-free server backup and recovery service that offers automatic offsite data protection with continuous backup and 100% guaranteed recovery

www.Processor.com/LiveVault

The backup technology also uses disk-based backup and recovery, which removes the failure and burden sometimes associated with tape. InSync's optional disk-based backup appliance, LiveVault TurboRestore, integrates with the InSync service, so data is automatically backed up locally if necessary. In either case, locally or offsite, data is guaranteed to be recovered, usually within a matter of minutes.

SavvySafe Backup Professional Server Edition. Savvy Networks is a backup and disaster recovery solution provider. Its SavvySafe offsite data backup provides data protection for servers, laptops, and PCs. It also protects every leading operating system and server-based software application.

SNAPSHOT

Savvy Networks SavvySafe Backup Professional Server Edition

Broadband data backup that helps prevent downtime and data loss

www.Processor.com/Savvy

Furey says, "A differentiating feature is that we are 'platform agnostic' and install on almost all the servers you might find in a data center. Most of our competitors are limited to just Microsoft Windows operating systems. We also support Oracle, Sybase, Lotus Domino, and Novell GroupWise, something no one else does." The solution has an easy-to-use Explorer-like interface and is an easy install.

A recent Gartner report found that 93% of organizations that have experienced a significant data loss are out of business within five years.

Savvy's backup solution also uses 448-bit Blowfish, as well as 128-bit SSL encryption. Following the initial full backup, Savvy's patching technology makes subsequent backups a snap. The patching process automatically compares two different versions of the same file and extracts the differences between the files. The patch file is usually 85% to 99.9% smaller than the original file and is transferred offsite quickly.

Savvy offers professional installation onsite or via remote access, depending on the location of its customers. It also offers custom plug-ins to enhance customers' backup and recovery plans, including email notification, remote management, open file manager, and various other collaboration applications. The Enterprise Server Backup solution offers 100GB-plus of storage space.

AmeriVault. AmeriVault is a provider of automated, online backup and protection for business data. AmeriVault's backup process is similar to LiveVault's, but Carol Arnold, spokesperson for AmeriVault, says it's her company's services that stand out in a crowd.

SNAPSHOT

AmeriVault Online Backup Service

$14 to $19 per gigabyte per month based on storage volume and compressed data

Online disk-to-disk backup solution, for data-dependent companies, over the Internet or via VPN

www.Processor.com/AmeriVault

Arnold summarizes AmeriVault's solution saying, "We offer a well-rounded backup and recovery solution that meets industry compliance challenges. Our solution, comparatively speaking, is very easy to install and get up and running and uses a superior form of file compression."

AmeriVault's setup involves a three-step process: installing the CentralControl software on a Windows machine and the Agent software on the machines being backed up; selecting the files and/or directories to be backed up; and scheduling the frequency of backups, encryption methodology, and type of backup for each server or desktop.

Users can schedule backups to run at any time and customize retentions according to specific business needs through a CentralControl software interface. There are also two major security features in the AmeriVault service. The first is unique account setup information that builds a proprietary connection, ultimately protecting the data from unauthorized access. The second is the option to encrypt the data before it is pushed to AmeriVault's mass storage vaults.

AmeriVault's solution supports all major OS platforms. Customers can select to encrypt their data on the fly before it is transmitted to the mass storage vaults. AmeriVault also supports multiple levels of encryption up to 256 AES.

Goodbye Tape?

Many vendors would agree that tape is dying out due to reliability and handling and storage and retrieval issues. Christopher Furey says, "The night isn't long enough anymore. Most backups in large organizations are aborted before the verify cycle or purposely unverified because the data backup window is too long with tape. Backup administrators frequently are faced with the fact that they can't take servers and critical systems offline for proper backups because they are used 24/7. These conditions are driving the market toward CDP (continuous data protection) solutions where the data is backed up every time a user makes a change to it automatically."

Furey says CDP backups let a user or backup admin restore a specific file to a specific time of day or version. He says, "Current investments in tape by most organizations are holding back adoption for now because CDP is new and mostly unproven."

Online backup and recovery services can provide a guarantee because the process is managed by service provider experts and the technical aspects are fully automated. When you are evaluating a backup and recovery solution provider, ask if recovery is guaranteed, as some companies only guarantee the data backup. Because the storage market as a whole will be $100 billion soon, it might be time to call in the pros if you haven't already.

Buying Tips

Small to midsized enterprises should look for a solution that incorporates the following components:

Continuous Backup
Ask your provider for continuous backup that allows data to be captured as it is changed, essentially in real time.

Automatic Offsite Storage
Look for a service that provides safe and accessible data-vaulting and transmits the data via the Internet, so physical damage to tapes is avoided entirely, and the data is immediately available for system recovery.

Immediate Recovery
Online services provide a means of recovering data immediately from any Web interface. Look for a service that offers this level of convenience and control.

The Guarantee
When evaluating any solution provider, make sure to ask if it guarantees the recovery, rather than just the backup, of data.

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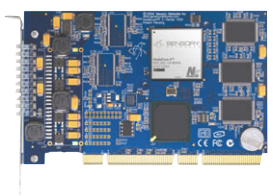

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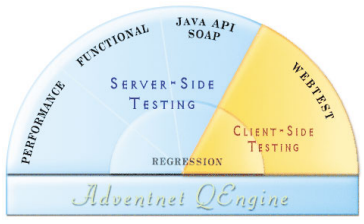

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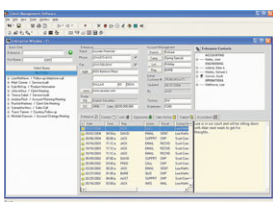

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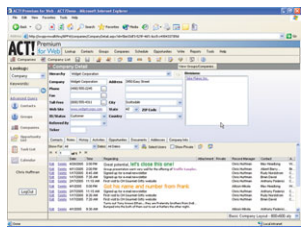

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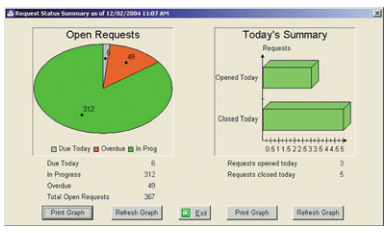

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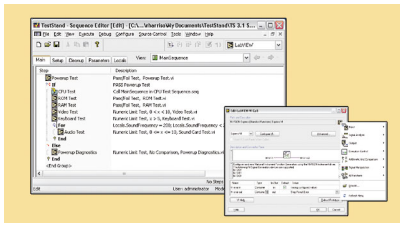

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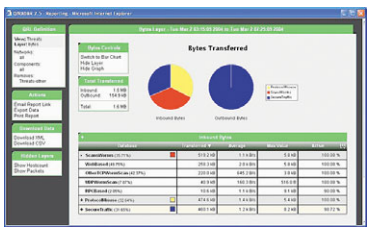

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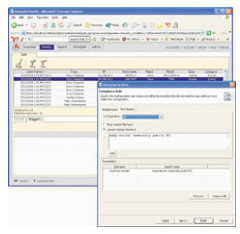

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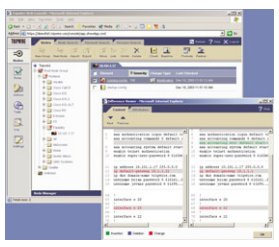

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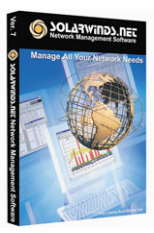

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On Cloud Nine With Five Nines

Having Five Nines Of Availability Is Ideal, But Is It Worth The Cost?

by Elizabeth Millard

• • •

THERE'S A GREAT DEAL of discussion about the "nines" of availability, with IT and data center managers wondering if they should spend more money to get just a bit closer to that highly available but fairly expensive "five nines" rating.

In uptime speak, five nines is used to describe highly available systems, referring to 99.999% availability. This is essentially 100% but with the acknowledgement that issues do crop up that can bring down a network or application.

Having five nines, whether through in-house methods or more usually through a hosted system, is ideal, but it's also cost prohibitive for many companies. To be cost efficient and still have available systems, companies have to balance downtime risk with business needs and get to a nine that brings availability without blowing the IT budget.

Crafting An Agreement

Small and midsized enterprises will likely hear most about nines when they're presented with a service level agreement from a hosting provider, but the number can be deceptive.

"Even experienced IT managers will fail to register the fine print on the agreement," says David Humphrey, a senior tech advisor at IT consultancy company Ekaru. "Not only is what components this number measures of importance but how a provider measures this performance."

What SLAs normally cover are network and power availability, with some providers covering hardware failure on the server itself. Most state that the SLA excludes normally scheduled maintenance but don't detail what that includes or how often it's done.

Typically small and midsized enterprises can get up to three nines of reliability from any host, Humphrey says. Pricing can range tremendously, from $10 per month up to $400, for example, because the break-up of big hosting firms in 2001 is still being felt, but the availability should be about the same at the three nines level.

To get more nines, companies are simply asked to pay more. For 99.99% hardware uptime, for example, a company would have to configure its installation for fault tolerant server provisioning, which brings a 60% service fee uptick, Humphrey notes. Some ecommerce sites may find that five nines could cost them about $30,000 per month with a hosting provider.

Overall Humphrey advises SMEs to focus less on the number of nines when negotiating SLAs and more on the factors that affect availability, such as multihome network connectivity, redundant power grid connectivity, UPS protection, and a dedicated service representative with escalation authority.

Business & IT Alignment

In figuring out whether to increase availability, companies need to go beyond an attitude of "always on" and determine whether the cost is worth it for the company, says IT consultant Craig Mullins.

"The question of availability is a business question more than a technology question," he says. "Too often IT folks think about availability in terms that are closest to them. That is, technical terms." Instead, companies should focus on what business requirements dictate that round-the-clock availability is required, he notes.

"Achieving five nines can be quite costly," says Mullins. "Any organization needs to cost justify such an effort." Ideally the business gains achieved by higher availability will be greater than the cost of achieving that availability. If it isn't, a company should question whether tapping into the budget is worth the outcome.

Determining availability should involve much more than just a desire to be "on the Web" or to implement bleeding edge technologies, Mullins adds. It should be tied to large-scale company needs that take into account the company's growth, number of users, and cost of a downtime incident.

"Just because high availability can be built into a system does not mean that every system should be built with a high availability design," he says. "A highly available system can cost many times more than a traditional system designed with unavailability built into it."

Raising Your Number

For companies that do want to increase the availability of their systems, one method may be to look beyond hosted providers and focus instead on internal hardware, especially if a company is trying to boost its nines with something like database availability.

Clustering is one option for increasing the reliability of servers, Mullins notes. "When throughput increases due to expanding business, systems can be kept online and available," he says.

Small and midsized enterprises will likely hear most about nines when they're presented with a service level agreement from a hosting provider, but the number can be deceptive.

In general, nines can usually be determined over time as downtime events occur, says Brad Feld, a venture capitalist who has been on the board of such technology companies as Raindance. "I think every company gets a couple of free passes," he says. "However, users do eventually become impatient."

Feld recommends that companies look at their rate of growth in terms of users and invest in a more redundant infrastructure according to the speed of that growth. "As an online service becomes more popular, the importance of it being up and operational all the time increases," he notes. "While this is a logical ideal, it can create pain at some point for a young, growing company."

Nines By The Numbers

Trying to figure out nines has to do with timing and availability. For example, a server that has four nines is available 99.99% of the time. Because a year contains about 31.5 million seconds, four nines means your system could be down for about 52 minutes per year. With five nines, or 99.999%, you would have only 315 seconds of downtime. Adding a sixth nine would allow you only 32 seconds of annual downtime.

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Make Your Data Center A 24/7 Operation

Continued from Page 1

room and the UPS is in another room," he says, noting that a faulty system will fail you when you need it the most.

Weydman also tells clients to buy a UPS with redundant battery strings. A unit without built-in redundancy is prone to failure because a problem in a single battery can take down all 30 or 40 cells in the UPS.

Even More Power!

But even the best UPS can't ensure 24/7 uptime. Most batteries run for 15 minutes. That's great for a quick outage, but a brownout that lasts for more than two minutes is rarely a switching problem and can often last for hours, says Weydman.

In that case, you'll need a generator. Running on gas, a generator can work for weeks and start up in as few as 10 seconds (in which time your UPS acts as a bridge).

Weydman also tells clients to maintain their power supplies carefully. They should look at a UPS daily and make sure there are no alarms or failure lights. A strange noise or smell (such as burning) is also a bright red flag. "Weekly," he says, "take a look at the load level. Once you start to get over 50%, you need to plan for the future and see if you'll need more capacity." And have the unit serviced twice a year to make sure its fans and capacitors are working.

Don't Forget People

Power issues aside, Dixon notes that staffing is "the biggest thing" in planning a 24/7 data center. "Are you going to staff it all day and all night? For a small to mid-sized enterprise," he says, "it gets expensive."

If you can't afford a 24/7 staff (which can double your center's payroll), you'll have to keep staff on call, and you'll have to know how they'll respond to midnight issues. "If they have to get up four times a week in the middle of the night," says Dixon, "morale starts to drop, especially if it's a five-minute fix like cycling a piece of equipment."

But the right tools can save you from headaches, he notes. Products from Avocent and Raritan make remote access a convenience, not a luxury, and cut down on overtime too. (See the "Remote Rules" sidebar for more information on these products.) If an admin can cycle a flagging server while he's still in pajamas, it saves him the time (and saves you the expense) of driving in past the witching hour.

Someone Who's Been There

Late night problems are standard fare in the life of Wellington Souza. As the director of IT for Highpoint University, Souza knows what it's like to make a data center run 24/7 without a huge staff. "We have an 8 to 5 staff," he says and then adds with a laugh, "But of course they don't work just 8 to 5." That's par for the course in a school where there's a thriving evening degree program.

But Souza values his team's morale, and he won't force them to work the graveyard shift unless there's no other option. "We just get very creative when it comes to determining what's an emergency and what's not," he says. Using systems that monitor power, heat, and servers are de rigueur in his data center; they hail staff members who wear pagers at all times, something that Souza tells them they'll have to do as early as their initial interview.

He also notes that good cooling can be vital to keeping the data center up and running at all hours.

"My biggest problem of all was actually air conditioning—there was a huge heat issue. It got to 105 degrees in North Carolina," and as a result, Souza began losing critical systems. He was forced to make a quick move to a new facility that was built but not yet occupied.

The new data center has redundant cooling that monitors the temperature in 16 locations in the room. "We set the primary system to hold at 69 to 70 degrees. The second air conditioning system holds it up at 72 to 74 degrees. We get a page if there's anything between 72 to 74 degrees."

The result? Souza has managed to keep downtime to a minimum, uptime to a maximum, and achieve the 24/7 service that so many firms want. What's more, he's been able to keep his staff happy—a rare feat indeed. But it's that mix of high service and high satisfaction that's becoming more and more common in the nation's data centers—something the right planning can do for you, too.

"Weekly, take a look at the load level. Once you start to get over 50%, you need to plan for the future and see if you'll need more capacity."

- Jim Weydman, 24/7 Technology

Remote Rules

Stephen Dixon of Enterprise Control Systems counsels his clients to use remote-access products from Avocent and Raritan to run their data centers when there's no onsite staff.

Avocent's DSView 3 software lets users integrate servers, headless servers, and network and monitoring equipment into a single remote interface. A license retails for $795.

Raritan's KVM solutions include the Dominion series, which lets admins control an IT device from a Web browser using KVM over IP. Prices vary but can be found on the Raritan Web site.

A 24/7 Checklist

If you're planning on 24/7 service, keep these points in mind:

- ✓ Have a UPS or a generator in case the power goes out. Make sure they have messaging and monitoring features.
- ✓ Good power systems can shut down your servers when the power is running out. That won't guarantee uptime, but it will guarantee return of service if your equipment is cycled properly.
- ✓ Don't forget about backup cooling. As with your UPS, make sure it can monitor and report status.
- ✓ If you can't afford a second or third shift, use remote software to let day workers fix late night problems from home.
- ✓ Be mindful of replacement cycles. Old or ailing equipment should be changed for new models that won't fail at 4 a.m.

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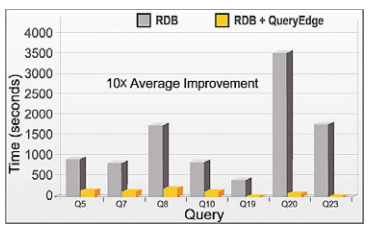

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Mobile Devices: Deal With Them Or Fall Behind

Continued from Page 1

over year, while converged devices surged 134.6% in year-over-year shipments.

Clearly, the prospect of carrying one device around instead of two or three is very appealing to today's mobile workforce. As device capabilities such as processing power, storage capacity, and connectivity options increase, adoption rates will only increase during the coming years.

The Mobile Device Problem

Businesses large and small are experiencing an influx of new mobile devices with vast capabilities for connecting to corporate networks, retrieving data, and storing it. Today's mobile workers are blessed with potent minicomputers that can do just about everything their desktop counterparts can do.

This blessing can also be a curse because the unmanaged use of mobile devices in your business can lead to security breaches. In an October 2004 Research Note, the Info-Tech Research Group points to three primary security concerns with mobile devices: protecting confidential business information, preventing device infection by malware, and preventing device takeover and misuse.

Mobile devices are built with compactness and portability in mind, but small footprints make them easy to misplace. And in most cases, PDAs or cellular phones that carry confidential business information are not secured at all. You go to great lengths to protect your IT infrastructure from unauthorized intrusions by using firewalls, encryption, and other protective measures. Don't bypass your expensive security systems by neglecting to secure your mobile devices.

The same goes for malware: The popularity of mobile devices has not been lost on virus writers. New types of malware specifically targeted at PDAs, cell phones, and other small devices are introduced every day. An infected PDA or cell phone could easily introduce malware into your network, again bypassing the systems that protect other assets in your IT environment.

Finally, be watchful of device misuse. This means users who, purposefully or not, let unauthorized people use their unsecured devices. This lackadaisical approach can result in higher device usage expenses and could result in loss of critical information or infection by malware. Develop policies to impress upon your users that PDAs and cell phones should be treated with the same care that notebook or desktop computers are.

In spite of the real security risks, many IT departments are not taking mobile device security seriously enough. A June 2005 Insight Report by Quocirca, a perceptional research and analysis company, explains that many IT departments don't enforce security for smart handheld devices as well as for laptops.

Also, Quocirca's research report emphasizes that because mobile devices tend to be relatively inexpensive, usage can often fall outside the range of the IT department's radar. Even though you might expect an SME's IT department to be able to detect and manage mobile device usage, IT personnel in SMEs may not have the time or the inclination to aggressively police the use of mobile devices.

Reap The Rewards Of Mobility

Obviously, if you don't know how many mobile devices are used in your organization, you don't know the magnitude of your risk. So it's important to do an inventory of your company's mobile devices, advises Info-Tech.

But don't lose sight of devices with limited connectivity and scads of storage space. It's easy enough for a disgruntled employee to synchronize a small handheld device with a business computer and obtain confidential business information. Be wary of personal entertainment devices, such as MP3 players, as some are now able to store all types of content, not just audio files.

Another element necessary to manage new mobile devices is the development of clear, enforceable usage policies. Without policies, you can unwittingly create grey areas that make it difficult to enforce mobile device usage. Policies should cover the gamut of issues surrounding mobile devices, from the types of devices allowed to the business personnel allowed to use them and the data access levels they enjoy.

Device Selection

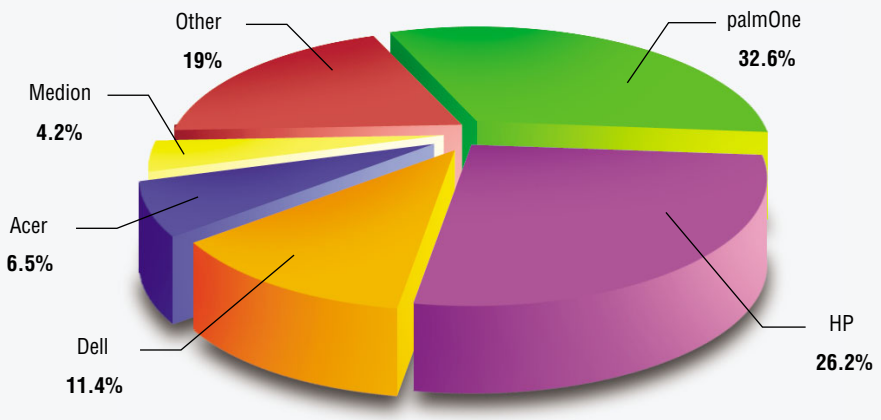
It's best to select standard devices designed for specific business usage. For example, staff professionals may get by just fine with cell phones, but be ready to accommodate the wishes of busy executives who want to stay connected but don't want to learn the intricacies of complex devices. On the other hand, sales personnel who interact with customers may require devices that support more complex applications. They also benefit from handheld applications that let them check order status or even place customer orders. Bottom line: Let user needs dictate device selection, but don't purchase more than you need. Keep it simple.

Mobility Without The Headaches

Mobile devices are here to stay. While these pint-sized wonders can take user productivity to new levels, they must be managed correctly to prevent misuse, data theft, and infection by new types of malware. Mobile devices are an extension of your IT environment that can travel well outside the bounds of your business. As such, these devices should be managed and secured with the same care that you apply to the hardware in your data center or the desktops in your users' offices.

Top Five Vendors, Handheld Device Market Share Q1 2005

In spite of recent shipment number decreases, palmOne is still the top dog in terms of handheld market share as of 2005's first quarter. HP is a close second.

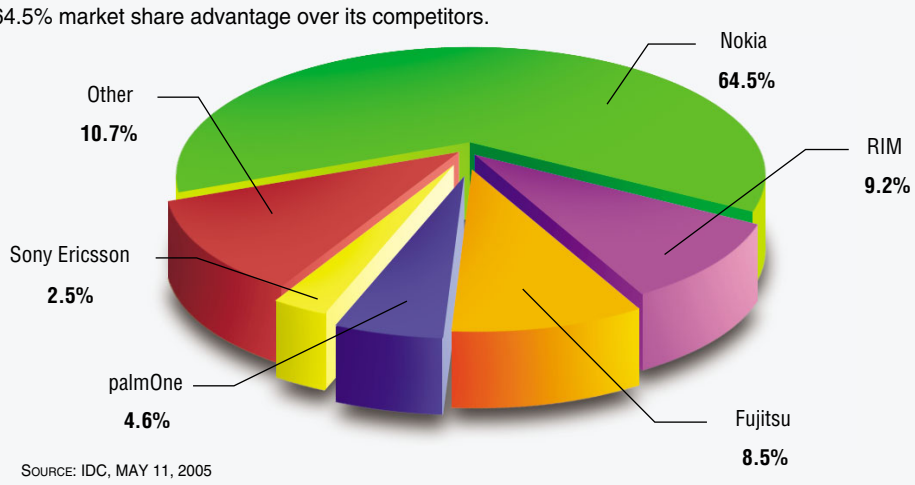


SOURCE: IDC, MAY 11, 2005

Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

Top Five Vendors, Worldwide Converged Mobile Device Market Share, Q1 2005

In the converged mobile device marketplace, everyone else is chasing Nokia, which enjoys a huge 64.5% market share advantage over its competitors.



SOURCE: IDC, MAY 11, 2005

Checklist For Securing & Controlling Mobile Devices

The following checklist, presented in a June 2005 Quocirca Insight Report, is a roadmap to beginning your successful management of mobile devices.

- ✓ **Establish policy:** Develop a business policy for mobile access.
- ✓ **Communicate:** Make sure all employees understand your policy.
- ✓ **Build on experience:** Develop experience with the devices and new technologies.
- ✓ **Protect the device:** Don't leave antivirus, firewall, and VPN protection to your users.
- ✓ **Track Assets:** Log corporate assets given to users and keep the data up-to-date.
- ✓ **Offer Amnesty:** If users already have a number of unauthorized mobile devices, offer an amnesty program to bring devices "into the fold."
- ✓ **Limit choice:** Limit devices to a select few, but keep specific business needs in mind.
- ✓ **Keep a sense of perspective:** Be pragmatic; complete security and control of mobile devices may be impossible.
- ✓ **Support policy and processes with technology:** Automated backup and synchronization as well as automated updates and other technology offer consistency.
- ✓ **Provide single point of support:** Provide a single source for technical support.

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Disaster Recovery Sites: A Question Of Necessity

Should Business Prevail Or Not?

by Chris A. MacKinnon

• • •

THE WORD DISASTER sends shivers down anyone's spine. IT managers and other data center staff want to avoid that word hitting home. Let's face it, when it comes to protecting data, anything can go wrong. And all disasters aren't physical; most can be attributed to data loss, data corruption, or user error. That is why more small to medium-sized enterprises are dedicating their data to disaster recovery sites. For SMEs interested in the ultimate in backup and recovery, having a disaster recovery site that's hundreds, if not thousands, of miles away from the main data center is a good option. The question is: How does an enterprise determine whether it needs a disaster recovery site?

Disaster Recovery Site Options

You can have a disaster recovery site anywhere that's survivable. The main idea for any small to midsized enterprise is not to go too grandiose; just get it out of the main building. Compared to larger enterprises, SMEs don't need that much to protect themselves. Here are a few options to consider:

- ISPs have cheap floor space, not to mention air conditioning and higher bandwidth. In most cases it's a matter of plugging your servers in and away you go. A large number of ISPs are renting floor space, which is exactly what most SMEs require. Ideally SMEs should lease from ISPs located on the opposite side of town or a couple of counties away.
- The CIO or owner's house is sometimes a good option, as well. With ADSL, connections can happen from almost anywhere.
- Resellers are a trusted IT arm for many SMEs, and many are building small disaster recovery sites.

Jason Buffington, director of business continuity for NSI Software, says it all boils down to the data. "If it is in business and depends on its data, it needs, at a minimum, an offsite copy of data which is more recent than last night's tape. Beyond that, there are simple formulas to calculate the cost of an incident—whether it be an hour of downtime on the mail server or four days during a hurricane. Figure out the cost, and it will scope what level of recovery is necessary. But the data must be protected, and it needs to be offsite."

Dan Bailey, vice chairman of Disaster Recovery Institute International's education commission, believes the best way is through strategic planning. "The basis for determining what strategies are needed for any organization's disaster recovery efforts is a BIA (business impact analysis) and a risk assessment. The results of the BIA are important because they assist the management team in understanding the impacts of a disruption. These impacts are classified as financial exposures and intangible effects."

Bailey says the risk assessment is vital because it presents events and any inherent hazards that could negatively impact the organization's ability to continue normal, day-to-day business operations. The real end result of a risk assessment is an action plan of how to mitigate as many of the high-level, most likely risks to the organization. "The need for a disaster recovery site whether it's for the business functions or for the IT functions would be part of this determination," says Bailey.

The $ Factor

In some circumstances the bottom line prevails. But according to Buffington, a disaster recovery site is something that any SME cannot afford not to have. "If you have a small number of servers and employees, the likelihood is that it will only take a small budget to protect it. SMEs don't need the same infrastructure that a Fortune 500 company does, so don't assume that disaster recovery must cost Fortune 500 prices." He says unlike large enterprises, SMEs don't have deep pockets, so a few lost days of work or productivity can close the business, based on nothing but cash flow.

Statistically speaking, Gartner estimates that 40% of SMEs will go out of business if they cannot get to their data within the first 24 hours after a crisis. Other bureaus will report that 30% never reopen and of those bureaus that do, significant percentages eventually go out of business due to cash flow. Buffington says, "SMEs tend to deal in commodity markets, so while customers would like to stay loyal, it is actually easier for them to seek out a new provider, particularly if their original provider has lost their data, as this would be the tangible link."

Although the number of SMEs jumping on the disaster recovery site bandwagon is growing, the numbers are still low over all. According to Bailey, the vendors are the main factor. "There are many of these types of sites available, but it's the number of vendors offering the services focused on the small to midrange enterprises that are limited. The larger vendors have acquired the smaller vendors, limiting the pool of available vendors in the marketplace."

He says this type of business has very high overhead costs. "There are the buildings themselves, the equipment necessary to recovery their clients, the subject matter expertise to not only install but maintain the various types of equipment. All of these costs have to be passed on to the clients, which can price them out of the market."

Buffington adds an interesting perspective on the number of sites in existence. "A big part is the cost model and also concerns for data security. Probably the most compelling thing that I am seeing to alleviate the costs and to encourage regional disaster recovery vendors for SMEs is the use of server virtualization software, most notably VMware. By creating multiple, virtual machines in one physical asset, disaster recovery providers can allow several clients to share one physical box, greatly reducing the costs while still preserving autonomy, security, and privacy."

As replication continues to grow in mainstream and as the power of mixing replication and server virtualization becomes understood, Buffington expects that many large resellers will eventually offer some level of disaster recovery offsite service.

The People Factor

When an SME is faced with a disaster of sorts, people can also become an issue. So how does a company replace the human resources in the event of a disaster? While both Bailey and Buffington would agree that an appreciable human loss is arguably unrecoverable, they do offer their wisdom on the subject. Buffington says, "They replace human resources through documentation, cross-training, and a prebuilt staffing plan that accurately identifies job requirements, core job functions, and where to find what."

Bailey also pushes cross-training. "The most common sense approach for this ultimate challenge is cross-training within the enterprise. In the event of a more localized crisis or disaster, the intent is to use trained staff to offset the loss of experienced staff." Recovery procedures, as well as standard operating procedures, should be written with enough detail that anyone with even a limited amount of experience with a particular function could pick up the document, follow the procedures, and have the function operating within the acceptable time frame.

Disaster Recovery Guidelines

According to Crisis Management and Disaster Recovery, an online disaster recovery advisor, there are a number of essential guidelines to follow in the event of a disaster. Maintaining control is by far the common denominator.

- Keep the disruption to the bare minimum
- Return to normalcy as quickly as possible
- Maintain control over a series of events where chaos will reign
- Prioritize the efforts of people, the sequence of events, and the strategies used during the recovery and restoration phases
- Ensure the security of information and equipment so that other consequential disasters will not occur
- Gain and maintain management support and confidence
- Prevent other consequential damages as a result of this disaster

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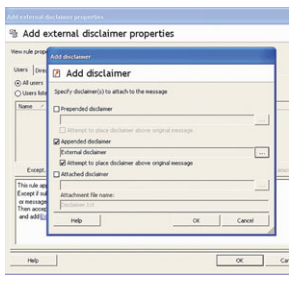

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Hot, Warm, Or Cold?

Choosing The Right Type Of Disaster Recovery Site

by Ericka Chickowski

• • •

Once only an option for the richest enterprise IT departments, disaster recovery sites are no longer a luxury in today's business world—not even for small enterprises. Disaster recovery isn't simply a matter of backing up data. Following the destruction or disabling of an existing data center, it takes more than stacks of tapes to get the business running again. If there is no new location or equipment in place to make salvaged data available to users, all the best-laid backup plans in the world are worthless.

Unfortunately, the reality for most smaller businesses is that it is simply too difficult to convince the higher ups to part with money for a fully redundant offsite center with all the bells and whistles. The setup and maintenance costs for such facilities are high, and many nontech executives wonder at the usefulness of a recovery site when projected costs pile up.

This is why it is important to consider all of the alternatives available when proposing and implementing plans for a new recovery site. Though a readily available recovery site is ideal, it certainly isn't the only option out there. By studying all of the available choices, you can weigh the pros and cons of each in order to come to the best compromise for your business.

The Big Three

While there are many flavors of disaster recovery sites out there, most of them fall within three major categories: hot sites, warm sites, and cold sites.

Hot sites are fully equipped mirrors of existing data centers. These sites have all of the infrastructure needed to go live nearly instantaneously should a disaster occur. This includes cooling, network connectivity, servers, hubs, switches, and storage equipment—everything your data center has, a hot site should also have. These sites are typically synchronized continuously with the data center for little to no loss of data during an event.

Cold sites are everything hot sites are not. These minimal facilities have the necessary floor space and cooling and electrical equipment necessary to build out a new data center should a catastrophe occur, and that is about it. There is no actual IT equipment kept at a cold site, and no data measures are taken for quick duplication or recovery.

Essentially, a cold site is simply a fallback location in an area removed from the original data center that is suitable for the construction of an emergency facility. Recovery time can vary anywhere from a week to never at all if the disaster is catastrophic enough to destroy all of the organization's equipment and data.

Somewhere in between cold and hot sites is a category that has been gaining popularity recently. Warm sites have the cooling and electrical capacity, as well as prebuilt communications equipment for immediate connectivity. There is usually some backup equipment ready for immediate use, such as servers and storage equipment. In some cases, a warm site will also house a storage appliance for periodic replication of data from the original data center. However, most warm sites simply depend on tape backups stored offsite. Warm sites can be up and running anywhere between 48 hours to a week.

Each type of recovery site has its plusses and minuses, with many of these factors revolving around price, functionality, and availability. A hot site is obviously superior in terms of recovery time and data security. But these facilities are extremely cost-prohibitive, with only the most mission-critical data center warranting such elaborate and expensive recovery measures. Cold sites, on the other hand, are cost-effective but risky. They are the bare minimum required by even the most simple disaster plan but provide little insurance in the event of a major disaster.

Warm sites are the choice that most businesses are gravitating toward these days, as they are a compromise between cost and protection. This is the broadest recovery site umbrella, as a warm site's features can vary to create something that is just a step above a cold site or just a step below a hot site. This leeway allows every organization to design a disaster recovery site suited specifically to its needs.

Which Way To Go

The way you decide to equip your disaster recovery site will be a function of your available resources and the criticality of your IT operations. In order to decide between hot, warm, or cold sites, it is crucial to perform an analysis of your disaster recovery needs. Because this analysis is usually the first stage in designing an overall disaster recovery program, this shouldn't be such a stretch.

A thoughtful examination will help you yield two vital signs of your organization's disaster strategy: RTO (Real Time Objective) and RPO (Real Point Objective). RTO will be determined by how long your business can feasibly survive without certain IT functions. RPO is determined by how much data the organization can credibly lose or re-create after recovery. The less forgiving the RPO and the faster the RTO, the more comprehensive the recovery center will need to be.

Outsourcing & Other Alternatives

Although these recovery site umbrella categories describe the main recovery options available, it is important to remember that their definitions aren't carved in stone. For example, some businesses are choosing to place their disaster recovery sites in a colocation facility or other disaster recovery site shared by companies.

While this is certainly a great way to save money without skimping on functionality, there is one major drawback to this route. Many of these facilities are built on the assumption that only one of the businesses will need failover at a time. If several businesses are affected by the same widespread event, there could be problems. Should you decide to go through colocation, this is important to remember.

Even if you decide to have your own dedicated recovery site, you don't have to do it yourself. There are a number of vendors, such as SunGuard, Savvy Networks, Rackspace, and IT-Lifeline, that can provide outsourced disaster recovery services so that you can focus on what you're best at. These outsourcing partners can help work with you to not only create a customized hot, warm, or cold site but also the disaster plan used to run these facilities.

The Costs Of System Downtime

Disaster Recovery Journal estimates that an average of $78,000 per hour is lost due to system downtime.

Disaster Recovery Loans

The Small Business Administration offers loans of up to $1.5 million to businesses affected by disaster. But the application for one of these highly sought loans is no guarantee that a business will actually land the loan. And if your organization does get one, will that be enough to float the rest of the business' disaster needs, as well as IT?

In some cases all the money in the world can't replace critical data that has been wiped out. A recovery site properly equipped for your business needs can avoid the disaster loan hassle.

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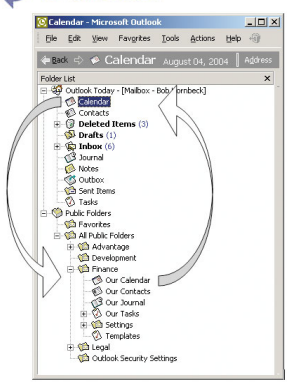

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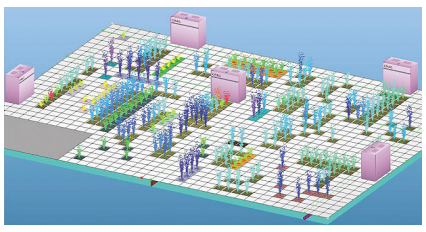

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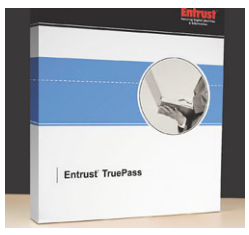

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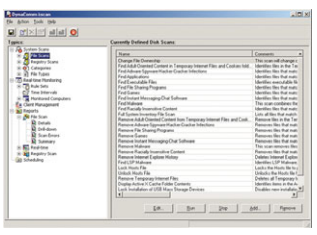

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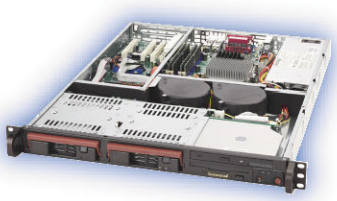

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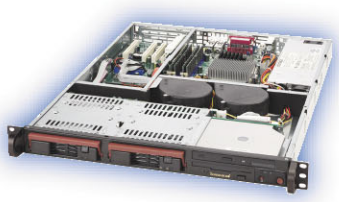

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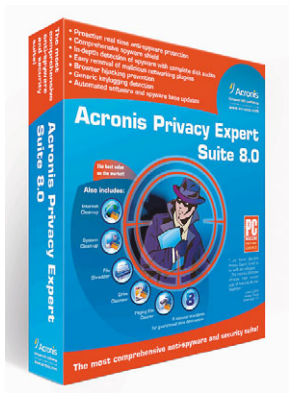

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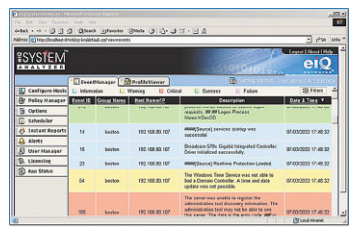

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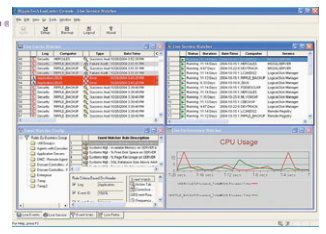

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Product Releases

PHYSICAL

Power Protection

■ **Tripp Lite** is targeting its new surge suppressor at notebook computers and PDAs. The Traveler 100BaseT (TRAVELER100 BT) Direct Plug-In Surge Suppressor is part of the company's Protect It! Notebook Computer Surge Suppressors line. The suppressor supports high-speed Internet connections and telephone lines. It protects up to 1,050 joules of AC, which makes it the highest rate suppressor in its class. It has dual built-in AC outlets with transformer block spacing and a retractable plug that lets users drop it into bags without scratching equipment. The device has dual diagnostic LEDS (correct wiring and suppression protection status). The Traveler 100BaseT includes the company's $50,000 Ultimate Lifetime Insurance coverage for connected devices.

COMMUNICATIONS

Cabling

■ **Net Optics** announced the release of the GigaBit Copper In-Line and Span Regeneration Taps. These taps eliminate contention for secure access points and let multiple devices monitor the same Span port or network link simultaneously. The Regeneration Taps support passive deployment of two, four, or eight key devices such as prevention systems, RMON probes, or protocol analyzers. These products from Net Optics offer redundant power supplies for enhanced system protection and don't require an IP address to view traffic on the monitored network.

Security

■ **WatchGuard Technologies** and **Citrix Systems** have joined efforts on the WatchGuard Firebox SSL Core VPN Gateway with Citrix Secure Access. This appliance for SMEs allows IPSec access from Web-updatable clients in the field. It supports up to 205 simultaneous users. Pricing starts at $2,790 for a 5-Tunnel Pack license and a three-month subscription to WatchGuard's LiveSecurity Service.

Storage Networking

■ **McData** introduced its Eclipse 1620 SAN Router through storage partners IBM and Sun Microsystems. The multiprotocol routing and extension device is offered as part of IBM's TotalStorage SAN m-type family (IBM's TotalStorage SAN04M-R) and the Sun StorEdge family of storage products. With support for standard protocols such as iSCSI, iFCP, and E_Port, the Eclipse 1620 can connect to IP backbones, Fibre Channel fabrics, and a wide variety of end systems, including Fibre Channel, NAS, and iSCSI initiators and targets.

Switch

■ **Dataprobe** is targeting businesses that need constant network connectivity with its new IP-AB series of Web-enabled communications switches. The switches provide redundancy and failover protection and have automatic failure detection (via the auto-ping feature). The switches can send alerts via email automatically and generate reports to multiple simple network management protocol managers. The IP-AB support 10/100/1Gb Ethernet, RS-232, RS-530, T-1/E-1, DS-3, analog telephone, and other interfaces. Administrators can select from single-circuit for rackmount configurations. The IP-AB switch starts at $535.

• • • • •

■ **SMC Networks** will release two new EZ Switch copper Gigabit switches later this month. The SMCGS16-Smart ($329.99) and SMC-GS24-Smart ($399.99) have 16 and 24 auto-MDIX ports. Along with advanced key management features, the 1U switches have jumbo frame support, as well as 8K MAC address tables for large network compatibility.

Wireless

■ A new chassis and a number of new features are present in **Buffalo's** new AirStation 125 High Speed Mode Wireless Cable/DSL Smart Router. A switch allows you to use the AirStarion 125 as a router or a bridge. Bridge Mode lets you quickly add wireless capabilities to an existing LAN, and Router Mode lets you share your cable or DSL connection with wireless and wired systems. The chassis lets you mount the AirStation 125 either horizontally or vertically. Security features include WPA support, Privacy Separator, and Buffalo's Intrusion Detector (a firewall that blocks outside attacks). According to Buffalo, the AirStation 125 now supports as much as 98.7Mbps of throughput (59.3Mbps faster than previous versions).

• • • • •

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QLogic Brings SANs To SMEs For Unheard-Of Prices

Product Line Targets Small To Midsized Enterprises Wanting To Switch From DAS To SAN

by Julie Sartain

• • •

THE SAN, as opposed to DAS area networks, is breaking out of the closet with newer, lower maintenance, user-friendly, and affordable solutions. Now targeted at small to medium-sized enterprises, the front-runner in this wardrobe is QLogic with its new SME product line, the SAN Express.

SAN Express includes the SANbox 1000 series Fibre Channel switches (the model 1400 has 10 high-performance 2Gb ports in a case the size of a portable CD player), the SANblade 200 series Fibre Channel host bus adapters for connecting servers to small workgroups, and the Windows-based SANsurfer software. In addition, QLogic is offering a SAN Express Starter Kit that includes one switch, two host bus adapters, the SANsurfer software, and some other accessories.

This system's greatest features are the low cost, high efficiency, and complete user-friendly installation and software. But what makes it unique or better than the others? Steve Duplessie, founder and senior analyst at the Enterprise Strategy Group, says, "Nothing in and of itself is 'technically' unique—the uniqueness is the entire product set being made idiot-proof to implement at a cost that is unheard of. The whole concept is to bring 90% of the high-end features and functions, and all the associated benefits of a SAN, to the mass market at a price that is pennies on the dollar vs. traditional implementations. Lastly, they packaged it up in such a way that you don't need to be an MIT Ph.D. to make it work. I'm pretty sure even I could do it!"

SNAPSHOT

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$3,295 for the SAN Express Starter Kit (includes the SANbox Express 1400 switch, two SANblade QLA 200 HBAs, the SANsurfer Express software, and additional accessories)

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Another plus for users is QLogic's decision to "sign up" VARs and distributors (as opposed to limiting their distribution through the bigger, harder-to-access OEMs such as HP and Dell). This program provides more options and more customization opportunities for users because more channel partners mean more access and support. In addition, some clients can also become channel partners and receive a host of added benefits from QLogic, such as certification discounts; demo equipment loans; additional education, sales, and technical support; plus more sales and marketing opportunities.

Competition includes Brocade's SilkWorm and McData's Storage and SAN Services. According to Duplessie, however, these are incomplete solutions. Duplessie says, "The traditional midrange switch guys would include Brocade and McData—but they don't make host bus adapters, so you'd have to add Emulex (or QLogic) and some software management. QLogic packages up the whole enchilada into a nice neat box. The competition is really 'the way we do it today'—QLogic's biggest challenge is educating the marketplace that these solutions are available, easy to implement, and won't cost a fortune." P

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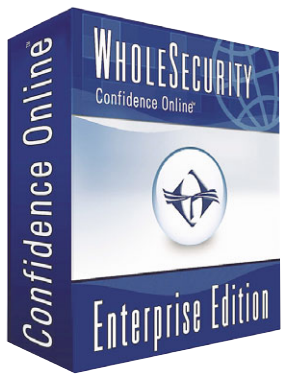

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Product Releases

Continued from Page 17

■ **Moxa Networking** announced the release of the AWK-1100. This device can function as an AP, bridge, or AP client and features redundant power inputs and an operating temperature range of 0 to 60 degrees Celsius. It is WPA security capable and is designed to be used in conjunction with Ethernet-ready devices for access to WLANs. The AWK-1100 is a plug-and-play device that uses RADIUS and IEEE 802.1X to authenticate and authorize wireless users.

END NODES

KVM

■ **Minicom Advanced Systems** released the SmartRack 16, which is a rack drawer and multiport CAT5 KVM switch all in one. You can connect the SmartRack 16 to as many as 16 workstations or servers and use the switch with a variety of platforms, including PS/2, SUN, and USB. Minicom's multilingual keyboard device lets you choose from seven language models and eight keyboard options. The unit also features Minicom's dual-rail technology, which puts the monitor on a separate rail from the keyboard and mouse.

Mobile

■ **Dell** announced that the Latitude D610 notebook and Precision M20 mobile workstation can be configured with a new shock-resistant 30GB hard drive. These drives are priced at $129 and are constructed using special dampening material inside the drive enclosure in order to provide added protection against shock—up to a 145% increase. This additional shock resistance supplements Dell's Strike Zone technology, a standard feature on most Dell mobile platforms that helps protect hard drives from everyday bumps and bounces.

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■ **Mobility Electronics** announced the availability of its latest wall power adapter, the iGo wall 160. This power product is designed for use with high-performance notebooks with large screens and high-end video cards and processors. The AC adapter provides up to 160W of power and comes bundled with the iGo dualpower accessory, which lets you simultaneously charge your notebook and slow-power mobile devices. Other features include automatic voltage regulation, power factor correction, and automatic temperature protection.

Server

■ **Verari Systems'** new RM4205 rack-mount server supports up to four Intel Xeon MP processors on SR4850HW4 and/or SR6850HW4 chipset platforms. The 4U server features Memory RAID, RAID On Motherboard, and Fibre Channel, as well as support for up to 8MB of L3 cache. It's certified for Intel's ESAA (Enterprise Server Acceleration Alliance) initiative.

Storage

■ **Axiomtek** announced its NAS-104AW server appliance, the latest addition to its Fastora product line. The Fastora NAS-104AW combines a SATA-based NAS product and Microsoft Windows Storage Server 2003 to meet the demands of easy-to-use document management. In addition, by adding backup and instant recovery software called ExBoot, the product provides a fault tolerant storage device for SMEs and entry-level enterprise storage platforms.

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■ **iQstor Networks** launched the native iSCSI iQ1250 Storage System designed for small to medium-sized enterprises. The iQ1250 features volume manager-based storage virtualization, snapshot, mirroring, policy-based storage provisioning, capacity growth, SAN management, and remote support. Customers can implement the device in a range of situations, such as disk-to-disk or centralized backup, virtual tape, server and storage consolidation, storage provisioning, or fixed content. The iQ1250 is expected to cost $6,500 with 1TB of storage.

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■ **LaCie's** d2 Extreme drives offer up to 2TB of storage and data transfer speeds as high as 800Mbps per bus. LaCie sells three versions of its d2 Extreme drives. The standard d2 Extreme series has a transfer rate of 64MBps over FireWire 800. Capacities include 160GB, 250GB, 300GB, and 500GB. The standard version measures 3.5 inches and comes in a 1U form factor, while the d2 Big Disk comes in a 5.25-inch 1U design. A new design feature integrates heatpipes to draw heat away from the hard drive and aid in cooling. Fans provide additional cooling but shut off automatically when not needed. The d2 Big Disk Extreme operates at speeds up to 800Mbps per bus across FireWire 800. Capacities include 500GB, 600GB, and 1TB. Finally, LaCie's d2 Bigger Disk Extreme provides all the features found on the d2 Big Disk Extreme in a 5.25-inch 2U form factor and comes in capacities of 1TB, 1.2TB, and 2TB. Prices range from $179 for the 160GB d2 Extreme to $2,299 for the 2TB d2 Bigger Disk Extreme. All models also include support for FireWire 400 and USB 2.0 connections. No drivers or additional software are required when using Windows 2000 or XP or Mac OS X.

Workstation

■ **Innovativ** has announced EdgeSÂF (Edge Services Architecture Framework), a scalable alternative to the desktop workstation. With EdgeSÂF, companies can avoid many of the security risks associated with standard workstations. A company's resources, processes, and procedures can occur within the data center rather than on employee's workstations. EdgeSÂF monitors faults and provides capacity and performance reports. These reports are available instantly or as comprehensive, historical analyses. Through the Services on Demand feature, administrators can implement rules and provide a customized system to each employee.

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■ The new ClientPro 375 from **MPC Computers** sports the new BTX (Balanced Technology Extended) form factor to deliver better cooling with less noise. The BTX design includes larger case fans that are capable of moving more at lower speeds. Intel's Quiet Cooling technology further reduces noise by running fans at lower speeds when the system's running at cooler temperatures. An air duct helps guide airflow so the processor and chipset can be actively cooled using only case fans to further reduce noise. The ClientPro 375 relies on Intel's 945G technology, which includes Intel's Graphics Media Accelerator 950 integrated graphics. The board supports Intel Pentium 4 processors running on an 800MHz FSB.

Components

■ **AMD** has introduced its new Mobile AMD Athlon 64 4000+ processor. Features include enhanced virus protection and support for 64-bit and 32-bit applications. According to AMD, Fujitsu plans to use the processor in its AMILO A1667G notebook. In addition, AMD is also offering its Athlon 64 X2 dual-core processors and Athlon 64 FX-57 processors to notebook manufacturers. AMD notes that Voodoo is planning to offer both chips in its new ENVY Heavyweight u:709 notebook.

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■ **LSI Logic** announced that its single- and dual-port 4Gbps Fibre Channel HBAs will ship with the SGI InfiniteStorage TP9700 4Gbps storage array. The companies say that by combining LSI Logics 4Gbps Fibre Channel HBAs with the SGI InfiniteStorage TP97000 storage array, end-users can now take advantage of a complete, nondisruptive 4Gbps storage infrastructure that provides twice the performance of the previous 2Gbps Fibre Channel generation for increased productivity.

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nVision's Test Assesses Your SME's Vulnerability

Service Level Auditing, Diagnosis & Proactive Repair For Java & .NET Applications

by Alan Petraske

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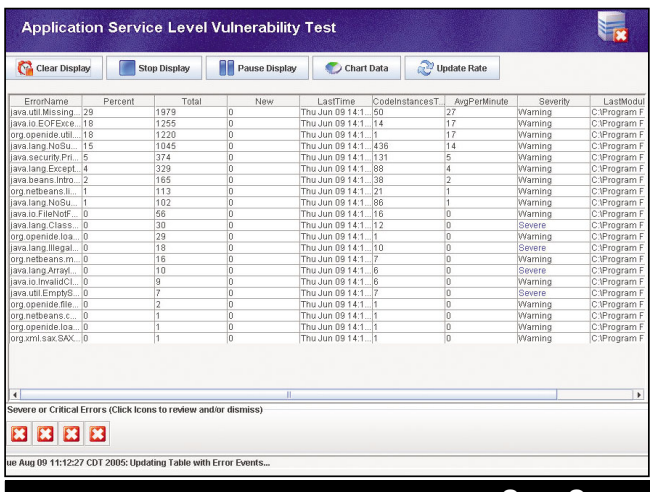
TO DELIVER HIGHER customer support and sales, businesses rely more and more on Java and .NET Web applications. Yet in a recent survey by Gartner Research, 83% of IT managers surveyed reported that their customer-facing systems were down over 43 hours per year. More than half of these outages could be attributed to application failures. Unlike network or infrastructure failures, application failures often go undetected until complaints come in from customers. And with the cost of downtime topping $100,000 per minute in some industries, the case for applications with continuous availability becomes compelling.

The problem is that once an application is installed, both vendor and customer lose visibility and control. Until recently, IT managers have had only a couple of options when an application failed. They could review their log files if the application had been written to produce log files and write exceptions to them. However, the application probably would not see exceptions outside its immediate scope. Or managers could run the app in debug mode if they had the source code, although this creates overhead that may cause the application to behave abnormally. Basically the current technology hasn't changed since the 1980s.

In response, nVision Software has developed the Application Service Level VAT (Vulnerability Assessment Test). The VAT is an automated software utility that provides IT professionals with a real-time view of potential service-affecting errors in their Java-based applications and Web services. The test uses embedded Java telemetry to intercept events and calls occurring inside the application infrastructure, providing a virtual window into the application's vital signs and overall health.

After installation and the instrumentation of selected Java VMs, the VAT provides a real-time error event assessment and auditing in a tabular dialogue at a default rate of five seconds. Analysis is available by type of error and by severity. In addition, the VAT provides measurement of application service levels against quality standards. Critical, potential service-affecting application errors are detected automatically. The installed instrumentation is then removed and a chart or a report is generated that may be used for in-house review or sent to nVision for further analysis.

VAT works across platforms, supporting Microsoft.NET or Java on Windows, Linux, or Unix. To run the VAT, your system must have at least one network interface card and the use of an account with Administrator privileges. VAT works with Win2000/2003/XP, and you'll need 1GHz CPU or better and 512MB of RAM.



SNAPSHOT

nVision Software Application Service Level Vulnerability Assessment Test

Automated software utility that detects application error events and measures them against the service level requirements assigned to that application in order to assess its vulnerability

www.Processor.com/nVision2

nVision provides the test without charge. After running the test, users who want more information, the ability to filter errors, or instant notification of errors can obtain a free 30-day trial of the nVision AppVision-SLM product.

Product Releases

Continued from Page 18

SOFTWARE

Business Productivity

■ FootPrints 7.0 is the latest line of help desk/customer support software from **UniPress**. The entire series has been bumped up to versions 7.0, including FootPrints for eService, the FootPrints Hosting Service, and FootPrints for Exchange. Customizable field level permissions and integration with popular CRM tools head a long list of improvements to the FootPrints family. A three-seat starter pack for FootPrints 7.0 costs $3,995.

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■ **Sage Software** launched Sage BusinessVision 7.0 for SMEs. This version has over 100 improvements, such as expanded fields and tables, enhanced data management capabilities, easier third-party integration, a new database with better performance, and a new, easier to use UI. Designed for tasks such as inventory, job costing, payroll, and point-of-sale, Sage claims BusinessVision 7.0 is ideal for companies that have outgrown entry-level bookkeeping software. BusinessVision 7.0 Standard Edition includes 18 accounting and business management modules and supports either five or 10 users.

Database & Data Mining

■ **IBM** introduced WebSphere DataStage TX 8.0, which provides real-time data transformation. The software is based on SOA to deploy data integration that meets ebusiness standards. Both XML and non-XML formats are supported and can be combined within the same document. Users can combine and send data, applications, and messages to end users, as well as to specific applications. WebSphere DataStage TX 8.0 is compatible with WebSphere Message Broker, SAP, Siebel, Oracle, and PeopleSoft.

Graphic Design

■ **ClearStory Systems** has a new media services platform: the Radiant EMS (Enterprise Media Server) 2.1. The J2EE server supports more databases, including IBM DB2 Universal Database, Microsoft SQL Server, and Oracle 9i. The peerless server handles graphics, multimedia, digital video, presentations, and compound documents. ClearStory notes that because companies can use Radiant EMS with their ECM infrastructure, they can centralize content and incorporate media assets.

Imaging & Printing

■ **Jolly Technologies** released Print Studio 2E, a barcode label software suite. New features of this version include increased user control, one-click database configuration for all popular database formats, compatibility with any ODBC or OLE DB-compliant database, and a fully integrated database editor. In addition, Print Studio 2E includes mail-merge fields, advanced graphics tools and layer support, double-sided document design, highly flexible auto-number generators, support for over 2,500 label templates, comprehensive print options, and a standalone command line application for batch processing. One of the more revolutionary features in Print Studio 2E is its simplified data entry and printing process, which lets you enter, modify, view, delete, or print data from a single interface.

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■ **TechnoRiver** released a new label design, barcode printing, and RFID encoding software suite, SmartCodeStudio. The suite has a large stock database that is expandable and handles different industry labels. It also has True Windows Printer Drivers that handle most thermal printers. The software can handle large print jobs (thousands of labels per day) and includes auto-identification software. The features include a drag-and-drop industry compliant RFID tag encoder. TechnoRiver offers a trial version from its Web site and also sells two editions: Standard Edition, which is available for $99.99 and Professional Edition, which is available for $289.99. Both editions support Win98/Me/NT4/2000/XP.

Messaging

■ **Infacta** introduced GroupMail 5 for Windows, a suite of messaging applications that lets users send email or SMS text messages to groups of individuals for targeted marketing. The software personalizes the body of email messages. Even subject lines and attachments can be personalized for individual recipients. GroupMail 5 supports HTML, which lets users add graphics and other elements to messages. Furthermore, the software also supports if-then-else and similar scripts for messages that are truly personalized, eliminating the perception of recipients that communications are simply bulk messages. Users can also configure Group-Mail 5 to automatically send messages at a scheduled time. Infacta offers a Free Edition with 100-message and single-connection limits, Personal Edition ($99.95) for a single user, and Business Edition ($249.95) for up to 256 simultaneous users. GroupMail 5 is compatible with Win98/Me/2000/NT4/XP.

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SATA II RAID Goes Mainstream

LaCie Introduces Low-Cost External Disk Array For Desktop Users

by Joseph Pasquini

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As Serial ATA technology continues to drive down the cost of large capacity disk storage, high definition video users, audio and graphics artists, SOHO and small business consumers, and other IT professionals have begun to take notice. Designed with these awakening desktop market segments in mind, LaCie has introduced its Biggest S2S SATA II RAID tower.

The S2S, which is available in both 1.25TB and 2.5TB versions, is sold as a tower configuration featuring five SATA II bays populated with hot-swappable drives. The LaCie storage array supports RAID levels 0, 1, 0+1, and JBOD, as well as automatic online rebuilding. Array configuration is accomplished via a graphical management console. By default, the arrays are shipped configured as RAID 0 to let users immediately use the array.

"It's simple to set up with easily identifiable RAID settings, and video editors or IT administrators can instantly get the extra headroom they need for real-time editing or fast backup," says Emanuela Boila, product manager for LaCie.

In addition, the Biggest S2S comes bundled with the LaCie SATA II 3Gbps PCI-X Card 4E. Supporting both Macs and PCs with a PCI-X slot, users can simply plug the storage array into the SATA card using the supplied interface cable. It supports Win2000/2003/XP, as well as Mac OS X.

According to LaCie, the S2S is capable of reaching speeds of up to 3Gbps across the host interface. Depending on the RAID configuration used, sustained transfer rates of up to 187MBps are also possible on Mac systems when the array is configured as RAID 0. When similarly configured, rates as high as 160MBps can be achieved on 64-bit Windows-based PCs. On 32-bit based machines, the transfer rate drops to 99Mbps or less.

The Biggest S2S faces competition from Silicon Image's SteelVine SV2000 and Overland Storage's REO 1000 and 4000 models. The SV2000's storage capacity tops out at 2TB with the REO units sized at 1.6TB and 3.2TB, respectively. The REOs also feature Dynamic Virtual Tape functionality, which allows the arrays to appear as a tape library for backup purposes. LaCie additionally faces competition from component vendors, such as Addonics, who cater to desktop users wanting to supply their own hard drives. Priced at an incredibly low $219, the Disk Array 4SA enclosure/SATA II PCI-X RAID controller bundle from Addonics can be mounted either externally or directly within a PC. LaCie's latest storage solution differs from the field, however, as it ships ready-to-run at an aggressive pricing point.

SnapShot

LaCie Biggest S2S

$1,999 for the 1.25TB version and $3,499 for the 2.5TB version; a two-year warranty is also included

Desktop SATA II RAID solution for digital imaging and audio professionals as well as SOHO and IT power users

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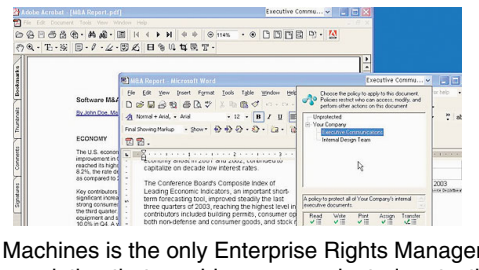

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Product Releases

Continued from Page 19

Security

■ **BitDefender** released BitDefender 9 Standard and BitDefender 9 Professional. In addition, BitDefender Internet Security 9 should be available this month. BitDefender Standard includes antivirus protection. BitDefender Professional Plus combines antivirus, antispam, and firewall protection and is targeted toward the SOHO/retail market. One of the new features in these packages is the HiVE module, which detects viruses even when there are no signatures available for such a virus.

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■ **Funk Software** announced the Steel-Belted Radius/SIM Server v 1.3. This new software lets GSM and CDMA operators use SMS messaging protocol to authenticate users. This lets wireless operators offer WLAN services even if they don't support 802.1X. The new offering from Funk also features AAA (Authentication, Authorization, and Accounting) services for 802.1X, non-802.1X hotspots, along with UMA (unlicensed mobile alliance) access to subscribers. The Steel-Belted Radius/SIM Server uses EAP-SIM and EAP-AKA authentication to provide a secure hotspot for devices in GPRS (General Packet Radio Service) and UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System) networks.

Storage

■ **EMC** announced upgrades to its Documentum eRoom Enterprise. Enterprise 7.3 allows teams to easily model their critical business processes within an easy-to-use environment and eliminates barriers involved with building dynamic, team-based applications. It has new dashboard capabilities, instant messaging integration, enhanced content server integration, and more.

Systems Management

■ **Alchemy Lab** introduced Remote Control Pro 2.0 for managing workstations and servers. The software can display a remote PC's contents on the administrator's screen. The administrator can use the keyboard and mouse to navigate and control the remote system. The software incorporates killing kernel mode drivers to update displays at a rate of thousands of frames per second. Remote Control Pro 2.0 places a load as low as 5% to 10% on the processor. It also features 128-bit RC4 encryption, network protocol plug-ins, multiple-client support, and unattended setup.

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■ **Winternals Software's** Defrag Manager 4.0 is the latest version of its enterprise defragmentation software. The software integrates with MOM 2005 and monitors scheduled defrags. The software has new reporting features, such as Advanced Mode, which defrags in offline environments and handles files, folders, and metadata regardless of permission settings and cluster size. It also boasts an enhanced user interface. The reporting features let it handle single PCs, Active Directory Organizational Units, or entire domains.

SERVICES

Security

■ **McAfee** is offering a number of new services to its partners starting with a new Try It Before You Buy It option. This option allows partners to let potential customers try out IntruShield, Foundstone, or WebShield appliances. This option gives sales partners the ability to let customers try out a product and make sure it suits their needs before they purchase. The new Security Action Pack is available to McAfee SecurityAlliance AssociatePartners and allows those partners to use McAfee security software on their own systems. McAfee is also offering a new MAX Hotline to its sales partners. The hotline is accessible via email or a toll-free phone number and provides partners with quick access to information such as order status. Finally, McAfee announced it is lowering the minimum investment needed for partners to participate in its Opportunity Registration program. The program offers financial incentives to partners who invest money to reach targeted market segments.

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■ **Sophos** announced the availability of Sophos PhishAlert Service, an early warning system that informs organizations of new phishing scams that target their customers. This service notifies online businesses of phishing attempts so that they can notify their customers and work to get the fraudulent sites shut down before incurring great financial loss, customer dissatisfaction, or damage to the company's reputation. The PhishAlert Service provides email samples and additional information to help companies respond quickly to phishing attacks.

Panduit's NetRunner Simplifies Rack Cabling

Organize Your Cables With Ease

by Daniel Dern

• • •

In mobile and office computing, we're increasingly wireless and cable-free. But in wire closets, racks, and data centers, there are plenty of cables—often more than ever, in tighter-than-ever spaces, being installed, changed, and moved more frequently, making good cable management more important than ever. Neatness also counts. For many companies, their network/data center is a key part of the facilities tour, and well-organized cables project a more professional appearance than a bird's nest of cables.

To help cable installers, Panduit recently introduced its NetRunner Vertical Cable Manager, an enhanced version of previous products called "slotted finger ducts," for use with system racks. NetRunners mount directly to the vertical channel on EIA standard racks, which are used in places such as telecommunication rooms and data centers, to manage cables on the front and rear of the rack.

Panduit's goals in creating the NetRunner Cable Managers, according to Todd Suddreth, the company's business development manager, were to "organize and manage the cables, protect cables from any damage during cable routing, and make sure that when the installer is finished, things look good." Likely users, he says, include enterprise customers and "anyone with any data comm[unications] gear." Cable management, including more precise bending, is increasingly important, he notes, as the port density on racks increases. "Equipment is getting smaller and denser . . . and IT wants to put more gear and cables on a rack because floor space is money."

One improvement, Suddreth says, is a shifting from a multi-step manufacturing process. "Now they're all molded, which ensures more consistently shaped products."

Other new features include integrated bend-control radius in the cable management fingers, which keeps installers from over-bending the cables, Suddreth says. Cable management fingers with 0.35-inch radius on fingers at each rack unit provide bend radius control for the cables as they transition to the vertical pathway.

Also, Suddreth says, "With the old duct style, the space between the 'fingers' was small enough that more steps were needed to feed cables through. The new style has larger gaps, avoiding the need to remove 'fingers,' so cable feeding can be done more quickly, which reduces installation and maintenance time." The larger size of the pass-through opening holes between fingers, he says, "accommodates larger diameter cables (Cat 6 and 10 gig) and provides for easier cable routing."

Another enhancement is dual hinged covers, which can be opened 110 degrees in either direction rather than needing to be completely removed like the previous snap-on cover. This eliminates the possibility of losing the cap while installing or replacing a cable.

Companies with cable management products that were competitive to NetRunner's predecessor, according to Suddreth, include companies such as Levitan, Chatsworth (CPI), Hellerman-Titan, and Ortronics. Panduit says it considers the new features of NetRunner to be distinctive and ahead of the competition.

SnapShot

Panduit NetRunner Vertical Cable Managers

Available in six sizes, starting at $100 for smaller sizes

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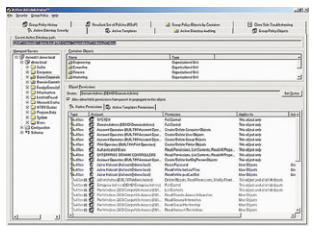

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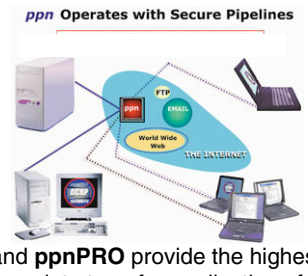

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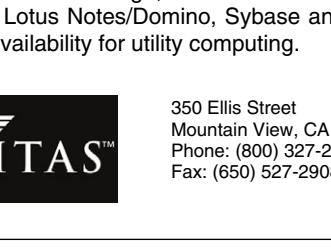

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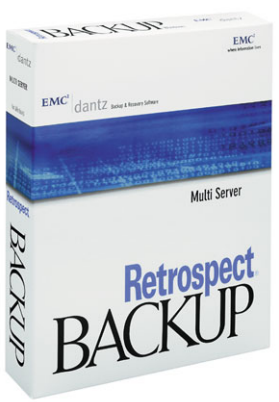

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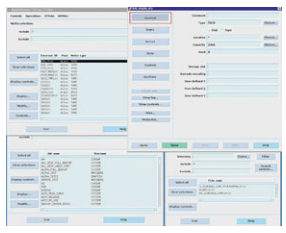

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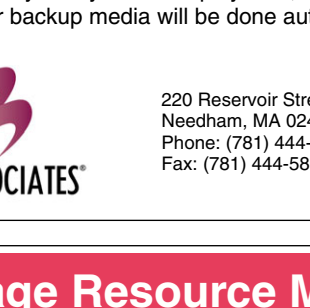

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OPINIONS
DATA • DEVELOPMENTS

Valid, Validating & Validated Values

I'm still heads-down working on the next edition of the "Hitchhiker's Guide to Visual Studio and SQL Server 2005." It's slow going, and it's been hot here in Redmond. My office is like an oven—over 90 degrees. When my P4 3.2GHz system's processor reached 171 degrees, I decided to install a liquid-cooled CPU heatsink before solder started dripping off the motherboard. The new cooling system, which includes a pump, fish-tank hoses, and an external heat exchanger, dropped the CPU to a balmy 136 degrees. It's also kind of sexy. The pump and heat-block glow an iridescent green. All I need now are those clear plastic cabinet covers, but I digress. . . .

Cramming Valid Values Into A Parameter

Last week I managed to complete the Building Commands chapter that I talked about in my last column. As I worked though the section on building a Parameters collection, I stumbled over a problem that has been there since the first version of the .NET Framework.

The problem has to do with how (and when) the Parameter object's Value property is validated. In ADO classic when we tried to set the Parameter Value property with a value that was either too long or not the right type (for example, a string instead of a number), ADO threw an error immediately. This made the error handling a bit tough as you had to wrap the code that set the Parameter with an error handler—one for each Parameter—but at least you knew which column was in error. On the other hand, ADO.NET does not care what you put in the Value property. You could stick your granny's nightie in there (if you could make it an object) and ADO.NET would not care. However, when you try to execute the Command, ADO.NET throws an exception that says it can't convert, that there would be string truncation or some such, but what Parameter is it talking about? This fact it keeps to itself.

Validating Via The CLR

So, what should you do about this? Well, my co-author Peter Blackburn and I worked for several days coming up with a solution. We tried several (some rather complex) approaches. When you construct a Parameter object you can set the intended datatype and the size (if it's a variable-length type like a VarChar), and these settings are exposed as properties. However, it's not that easy to compare a system type with a provider-specific type such as a SqlType. I started by building a giant Case statement that made the comparison and ran a whole set of values through it. It worked, but it was like screwing a 4-ton air conditioner on the back of my computer cabinet to solve my heat problem. We needed a better solution, and we finally hit on something simple.

We created another variable of the intended type and set it to the intended value. This was done in a Try/Catch so it would fail if the variable was not the right type. Testing for length was far easier. It's funny how this solution seems so obvious once you figure it out.

Validating At The Source

The real question is when should this test be made? Over the years I've learned that data validation is absolutely critical to data processing. I can't count how many times a simple data overflow or type-check issue has brought an entire system to its knees. But data validation problems are best solved early in the process—when the data is first created. If users are involved, you must consider that they might be the authority on the values. They provide the eyes to read the form or credit card number they're transcribing. Only they know the birth date and the invoice or part number. Your application might (and should) provide lists of these values when they are known so the user simply has to choose from a date picker or a drop-down list. But when this is not possible, it's up to you to validate this input data—and doing so just before you stick the value into a Command Parameter value is too late.

Validation needs to be done at the source—like in the TextBox control as the data is entered. This might mean creating a custom TextBox control that validates the keystrokes as they come in. This is not hard to do (we include a sample in the book), but it ensures that a numeric field only has numbers and a decimal point—only if the numeric datatype is not an integer.

CLR languages such as Visual Basic .NET and even C# make it easy to create custom controls to validate data. There are a wealth of these available on the Internet, and because they provide the source, they're easy to use and tune. I suggest you try building a few of these the next time you have to make sure that the object you're trying to stick into that Command Parameter fits—without worrying if the sleeves get cut off.

Send your comments to bill@processor.com

WILLIAM (BILL) VAUGHN

William (Bill) Vaughn is an industry-recognized author, mentor, and subject-matter expert with more than 30 years in the computing industry as a developer, manager, trainer, marketer, and writer. After 14 years at Microsoft, Vaughn stepped away to work on his new books, in addition to mentoring and leading training seminars. He's written six editions of the "Hitchhiker's Guide to Visual Basic and SQL Server" and two editions of "ADO.NET and ADO Examples and Best Practices for Visual Basic Programmers." He and Peter Blackburn just finished "Hitchhiker's Guide to SQL Server 2000 Reporting Services."

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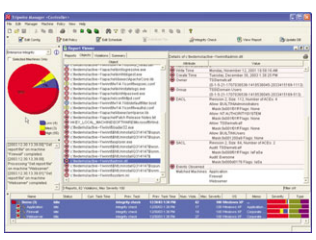

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OPINIONS
INFRASTRUCTURE

Sun Tzu On EMC

This year we've taken on at least two major infrastructure projects here at Sandhills Publishing, first replacing our tired old PBX with a new Cisco VoIP solution and second, implementing (or more correctly I should say attempting to implement) our first EMC-based storage network. The two projects share many similarities in complexity, scope, and even price. Unfortunately, the one area I can't use the same adjectives to describe is their implementations.

Our VoIP cut-over was not flawless, but issues we encountered were relatively minor and resolved within a few weeks. A couple weeks on the other hand, is now in month four and still struggling to make its way to live servers. Why the big difference? Because I failed to heed the wisdom of lessons I'd swear I already knew—but apparently forgot!

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, your victory will not stand in doubt. . . ."

- Sun Tzu

Lesson 1: Know Yourself

Picking a technology to fit a particular need is a task that any senior IT professional has probably performed several hundred times throughout his or her career. But selecting a product is seldom the hard part. Implementing that solution is where the real work begins. Understanding how that technology will integrate with your existing systems, are certainly within the realm of expectations for a project of that magnitude. Our EMC implementation, as well as your business processes and philosophies is generally a far more difficult task. To do it successfully requires a good long look in the mirror. You need to understand your business and the capabilities of your staff.

We have a saying here: Don't buy a 747 if your pilots are only licensed to fly a four-seater Cessna. If a technology is beyond your ability to run, consider another option. That said, there are a number of technologies such as network storage and VoIP that are fairly reasonable to keep in the air if you can just get some assistance with the take-off. The fundamental error I made with EMC is thinking we knew more about take-offs than we really did, proving once again that true wisdom is knowing what you don't know.

Lesson 2: Know Your Opponent

Picking a vendor to supply a given product is all too often decided for us by the manufacturer. Nearly every IT manufacturer out there today prefers to push the actual sale and implementation of its products to the channel, especially when dealing with a smaller enterprise such as Sandhills Publishing. To this point, the two protagonists of this story, Cisco and EMC, share the same philosophy. Where they differ is how they work with the partner.

When we contacted Cisco to talk about IP telephony, the first thing it did was involve a partner. I admit I felt slighted. I felt like we weren't important enough to deal with the "real" Cisco and we were being dumped off at some secondary tier. But what I see now in retrospect is brilliant. Cisco knows lesson No. 1. It knows who it is. It knows it is a massive enterprise and has a massive enterprise mindset. That mindset makes it very difficult for it to meet our needs. The partner, on the other hand, was just the right size. It understands the small to medium-sized enterprise and has worked with "pilots" who think they know all about take-offs. It's an experience set that allowed the partner to ask the right questions up front to make our implementation a success.

EMC doesn't get that. Choosing a partner with EMC was the last decision we made instead of the first. And even so, choosing a partner was little more than deciding which logo would appear on the invoice. The implementation team is still employed and/or appointed by EMC. The problem is EMC has yet to escape its past. EMC is so used to working with large enterprises that it is only accustomed to two scenarios: customers who hire it to do everything and customers who have storage specialists on staff.

MICHAEL DEMPSEY

AUTHOR BIO

Michael Dempsey is the information technology manager of Sandhills Publishing and technical editor of Processor *magazine. He has more than a decade of experience in voice and data communications and holds current CCNP and CCDP certifications. Dempsey is an expert in network security, virtual private networks, and IT infrastructure.*

Smaller enterprises seldom have the luxury of either of those two choices. SMEs thrive, even survive, on their agility. The most valuable technical employees in the SME might not be gurus in anything, but they can do some of everything. When EMC acquired the Clariion products from Data General, the approach of its products changed to meet the needs of the SME, but its implementation process has yet to follow suit. When EMC asked us if we knew how to fly, we said "yup" (as in, "How tough can it be?"), and they hopped onboard without so much as an "Are you sure?"

2,500-Year-Old Wisdom

I know in time we'll get our spruce goose storage network in the air, but I sure could have saved myself some headaches if I had only heeded the advice of an ancient Chinese philosopher.

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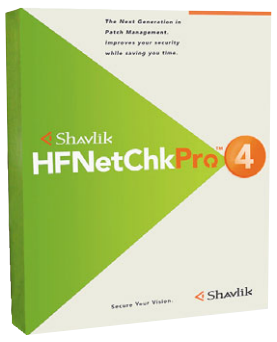

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Considerations Before Deploying Blade Servers

The drumbeat of pressure on IT managers to reduce costs and improve operations is getting louder with increasing economic and regulatory pressures. Server consolidation is the big buzzword these days to address this pressure. Interest and questions about blade server consolidation are really picking up. A blade server is a rack optimized server that shares infrastructure, such as power, Ethernet connectivity, and storage, within a chassis.

There are four major blade server consolidation types. They include:

Centralization: Reducing the number of data center locations

Physical Consolidation: Reducing the number of physical servers

Data Integration & Virtualization: Taking applications with low server utilization and placing them on virtual servers

Application Integration: Migrating over legacy apps to a blade solution

Return On Investment

CIO influence is forcing us to spend additional time helping customers measure ROI. One way we measure ROI is through a proprietary ROI toolkit that makes evaluations based on actual ROI of other implementations.

"About 50% of corporate IT budgets go for support, including staff and services," says Michelle Felten, IBM xSeries systems engineer. "By utilizing systems management software on top of blades, we are seeing customers save hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in reduced support costs."

In addition to offering very strong availability, blades reduce cabling needs by 87% and can double rack density, according to HP research (to receive a graphic of how blades conserve space, send a request to expert@cdw.com).

Blades' True Genius

Manageability is the true genius of blades. We're seeing customers who have reduced server deployment time from three hours to 30 minutes. Blade solutions can be configured to have failover capability so that if a blade fails, the workload is automatically distributed to available servers. Patches can also be automatically deployed.

Full out-of-band management capability is a valuable benefit if you have multiple data centers. Using IBM or HP blades, this feature allows an administrator to take full control of the servers in all the data centers as if the administrator were in two places at once.

Another blade management strength is the ability to automatically allocate servers where they can be most fully utilized. Banks, for example, often have both teller-related applications and back-office applications that run at separate hours. A blade can be configured to be provisioned to run the teller applications during the day and then automatically reprovisioned to run the back office reports at night. This reduces the number of servers you have to purchase.

Power & Cooling

High-density servers such as blades give off a lot of heat, which makes power and cooling issues paramount for blade solutions, not just for performance reasons but also to minimize fire risk. In a blade environment, a rack itself requires additional power because it can support up to 96 servers whereas without blades, a rack may hold 30 to 40.

If you are considering blades, you must budget for power. "In most cases the power and cooling infrastructure in a data center must be upgraded or the blade server loads must be spread out over multiple racks," says Dave Johnson, general manager of Infra-StruXure Rack Systems for American Power Conversion. "Blade servers draw up to 20 times the electrical power per rack and generate up to 20 times the heat per rack compared with the average data center."

One of the most critical pieces of advice we offer customers is that it is vital, especially if your source for blades is different from your source for power solutions, to make sure that your power and blade designs are compatible. Incompatible UPS devices, for example, may not turn on when needed. Make sure your technology provider, like CDW, has experts in both servers and power to receive an integrated solution.

MOOSA MATARIYEH

Moosa Matariyeh, a solutions architect, is part of a team of more than 200 CDW technology specialists and systems engineers who help customers navigate complex choices of technology solutions to identify which ones are most appropriate for their organization. Matariyeh designs server configurations for customers and leads training sessions on the latest server products and trends. He holds IBM and CompTIA certifications and has earned a degree in network and communications management from DeVry University.

^ AUTHOR BIO

When Blades Are Not Appropriate

You really need to have six to eight blades to fully realize blade benefits. There are other situations where a blade solution may not be appropriate. Some homegrown applications that have interfaces that include older technology don't integrate well with blades. An effective blade environment also requires a SAN (except for a Citrix platform or a Web server). So, if your applications require a large amount of internal data storage and you cannot also deploy a SAN, this would not be a good blade scenario.

Download a presentation on this topic at newsroom.cdw.com/asktheexpert/expertfeatures.

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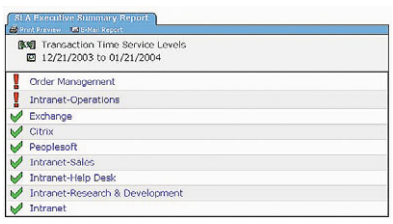

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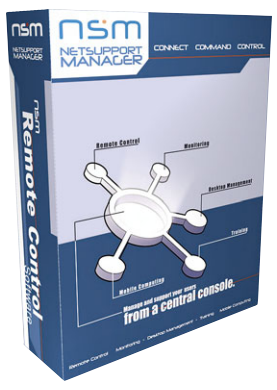

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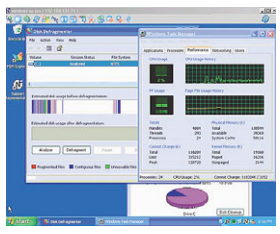

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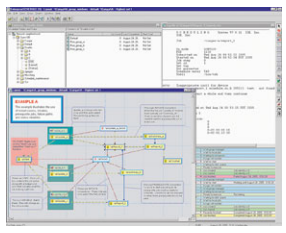

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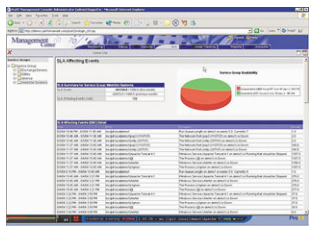

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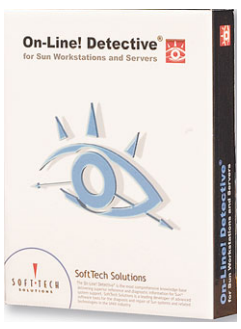

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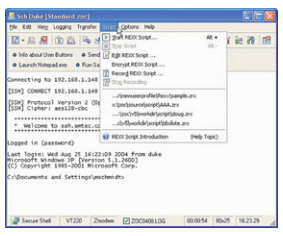

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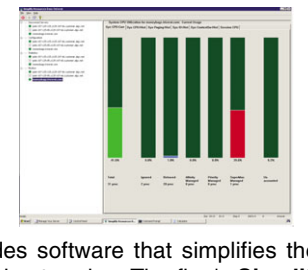

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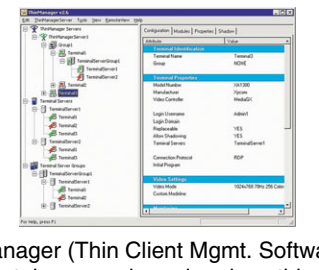

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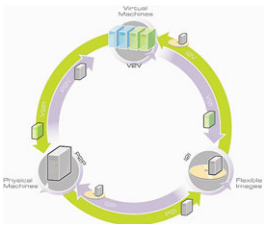

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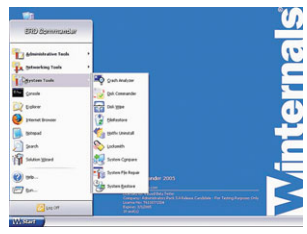

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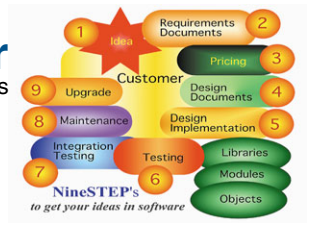

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BOOK REVIEW

Open Source Sesame

"The Practical Manager's Guide To Open Source" Is Just That

by Elizabeth Millard

• • •

With even Wal-Mart selling a Linux-based laptop, open source is all the rage. But that doesn't make it straightforward. With multiple distributions, conflicting advice on getting ROI, and migration issues, integrating open source into a company can feel more painful and confusing than it should.

That's why "The Practical Manager's Guide to Open Source" is so refreshing. Written in a very straightforward style and brief enough to read in a few hours, the guide provides insight on evaluating open-source software, determining costs and savings, and integrating software into existing infrastructures.

Penned by Maria Winslow, an open-source business analyst who's also a contributing editor of LinuxWorld Magazine, the book is in three main sections. The first discusses practical uses for open-source software, including a brief overview that doesn't go too far into the history of open source but instead puts the software into context for today's data center environments.

Key Concepts

- Migration to Linux or other open source should be approached from a goals-oriented perspective. For example, if the larger goal is to save money, an IT department has to lay out a basic ROI formula that determines costs vs. benefits. However, companies should keep other goals in mind as well, such as security, vendor neutrality, or use of staff with Unix knowledge.
- It's worth the effort to investigate different choices in open-source software in order to customize integration for your company. For instance, several email applications, including Ximian Evolution and KMail, have different features and should be evaluated according to how well they'd fit with existing operations and whether users would have to be extensively retrained to use them.

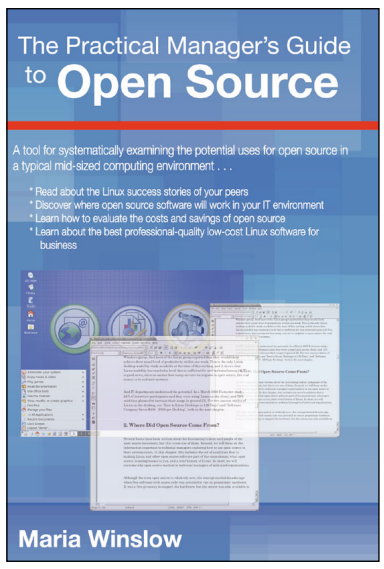
Applicable Insight

Part of this section's usefulness is a series of case studies about migrations that highlight different issues faced by real companies and how they used open source to address their problems. For example, a guitar manufacturer got targeted by the Business Software Alliance after a disgruntled employee claimed it was not in compliance with Microsoft licensing. After a determination that it was lacking 10% compliance, the BSA gave the company 120 days to fully comply. The CEO decided to go with Linux but gave the IT staff only until the BSA deadline to make the switch. Winslow details how the IT manager decided to use thin clients on the desktops, and then she gives information on what products the company used, what users didn't like, and how the IT staff checks on systems across the network.

Also a boon in the first section is advice about migration and ROI, the two issues most likely to keep IT managers up at night. Cost savings may not always be the most important goal, Winslow notes.

"For many, breaking partially free from a vendor in order to get a better deal on the remainder of what you do spend with them may come first," she writes. "Security, reliability, and lowered long-term costs may also come into play."

She suggests a survey of a company's computing environment, with a focus on which areas are likely to be potential migration candidates. For instance, the easiest servers to migrate are file and print servers, or email servers, and may be best for quick, seamless migrations rather than custom application servers or vendor-supplied application servers with no Linux port.



The Practical Manager's Guide to Open Source
Author: Maria Winslow
Publisher: Open Source Migrations
Price: $35
Format: Paperback, 226 pages

Helpful Overviews

The second section delves into established open-source software, which is very helpful for data center managers who have decided to make the shift into open source but don't know how to evaluate distribution pricing and licensing or how to distinguish Red Hat from Mandrakelinux.

Especially helpful is an overview of Linux desktop, which could be a boon for IT managers who have to explain such systems to users. Winslow untangles the features of different graphical environments and why it matters to know about each environment.

Resources For The Future

The third and shortest section covers what an IT manager should know in moving forward with deployments. Rather than tackle the range of post-migration topics, Winslow provides resources for further reading, including online and print magazines that can keep IT departments up-to-date.

In all, Winslow's brief book packs a great deal of power in terms of recommendations and advice and should be a well-thumbed handbook for any company taking the first steps toward open-source implementation.

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Tips For Outsourcing Your Technical Documentation

Write Your Own Rules To Find The Right Technical Writer

by Will Kelly

• • •

Well-done technical documentation can help stop the small to medium-sized enterprise technology manager's wireless phone from ringing late at night. It can also help build your SME's knowledgebase instead of relying on what's in staff members' brains for answers to technical and operational questions. While you may not have the budget to have a full-time technical writer on staff, you can always outsource technical writing to a contracting agency or independent technical writer.

Write Your Own Description

Because of the subjectivity of the technical writer job title, it's best to write your own technical writer job description and set your organization's standard for a technical writer. In the IT industry, some workers with the technical writer job title format documents and do light copy editing with no concern for the technical subject matter, while other technical writers author original technical documentation based on their analysis of the subject matter.

Writing Assistance, a technical writing staffing firm, stresses that "having good writing skills is more important than having ample experience with tools. Tools can be learned within a short period; writing often cannot."

Focus on their experience that meshes with your technical documentation requirements, not academic awards.

If you want a proofreader, desktop publisher, or copy editor to improve the technical documentation your technical staff writes, you can go to a temporary firm and save money because these positions bill out lower than a technical writer.

However, if you want a technical writer who can work independently and interact with your technical team and is experienced in your technologies, put it in the job description. To spare your technical team and the project the indignities of a long learning curve, be specific on technical fluency of the technical writer you are hiring. A technical writer already somewhat fluent in your technologies asking short questions and verifying technical facts means she is a benefit and not a resource hog.

Seeking The Right One

Although you may not have written a lengthy document since composition class in college, you can still find and judge an outsourced technical documentation provider to meet your requirements. When talking to prospective contractors, note whether they are speaking a language you understand. Or are they just telling you what they think you want to hear? Probing prospective technical writer candidates for how they interact with technical staff is important. Additionally, you should probe them on their previous projects. Talk to them in detail about their methodology and approach to documentation. Ask them what they need to be successful on a documentation project.

Focus on their experience that meshes with your technical documentation requirements, not academic awards. SME data center managers seeking a contract technical writer in most metropolitan markets can focus on technical writers with data center and large-scale network infrastructure, which is common experience for many senior technical writers who survived the dot-com bust and the meltdown of telecommunications companies a couple years ago.

Pam Wingfield of Editech Services, an editorial services firm, stresses the importance of scoping out the technical writer's work beforehand. "Before hiring a contract technical writer, you should clearly define the scope of work of your project and your deadlines. Will the writer be starting from scratch or adding to existing material? Will interviews be required with technical staff? What project milestones have been established? Knowing the answers to these questions will help you identify the level of expertise your project requires and enable the writer you choose to meet your expectations."

Don't believe the "ignorance as an asset" industry myth that says a technical writer doesn't need any technical grasp of what he is documenting. Hiring a technical writer who can work independently and communicate effectively with your technical staff is going to be worth the extra dollars if it keeps your staff focused on the core business. While documentation reviews and iterations are the nature of well-done documentation, putting an analytical and tech-savvy writer on the project can mitigate risk and shorten review cycles.

Writing Assistance advises against "putting too much emphasis on a lower rate when choosing a writer rather than skills and experience. A stronger writer with a higher rate may actually cost the company less as they may work faster and ultimately cost less."

If the technical writer's resume leads heavily with Society for Technical Communication participation and contest wins, you may want to disqualify him outright. The association is a vehicle for college technical writing professors to publish their theories. While it counts many professional technical writers amongst its membership, the organization's focus is more theory and academics than technology and business.

The Best Technical Writer For Your SME

Outsourcing your technical documentation doesn't mean you have to forgo control. You can write your own position description and exercise discrimination in the hiring process to find a technical writer who can augment your technical team and carry technical documentation projects independently, leaving your technical team to focus on their jobs.

Finding A Technical Writer

You have the following avenues for seeking a technical writer.

Editorial services firms offering specialized screening and testing of publications professionals. Their experience with hiring technical writers can be a benefit if you need professional help in hiring a contract technical writer. They do tack a margin for their services on top of the writer's hourly rate.

Independent technical writers are writers who have formed their own company or work as a sole proprietorship. Typically, they have lower margins than contracting firms or editorial services firms.

Technology-contracting firms provide the full range of technology contractors. They are less specialized, which could complicate your search for the right technical writer. They do tack an often substantial margin (20% to 50%) for their services on top of the writer's hourly rate.

Key Qualities For A Technical Writer

Some key qualities you should look for in a technical writer include:

- Strong writing and analytical skills
- Strong people skills, including diplomacy
- Active listening skills
- A strong technical curiosity, with technology being a major part of his or her life
- Experience working directly with a technical team; a technical writer who can mesh with your technical team is the key to a positive working relationship

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Small Storage Poses Security Threat

Protecting The Network From Removable Storage Media

by Tony Bradley

• • •

When removable storage applied only to floppy disks, the 1.44MB of data that could be stored on it may not have been enough to warrant devising a policy regarding the use and transportation of floppy disk media. However, floppy disks were eventually accompanied by Zip disks that could hold 100MB of data, then Zip disks that could hold 250MB of data, and Jaz disks that could hold 2GB of data. Now CD or DVD recording drives are found in many workstations and laptops, and for around $100 you can buy USB flash drives capable of storing up to 2GB in a space the size of a car key.

All of this compact, high-capacity, removable storage represents a concern when it comes to corporate security and protecting company secrets and intellectual property. Unscrupulous or disgruntled employees might take data and sell it or trade it. Even employees with good intentions may misplace or have a removable storage device stolen and compromise valuable data.

Develop A Policy For Removable Storage

Ben Rothke, author of "Computer Security: 20 Things Every Employee Should Know," says, "Organizations must know what the risks of these devices are to the infrastructure and whether they will be allowed or not. If allowed, they must determine who can use them and in what capacity."

Rothke agrees that developing a policy regarding removable storage is essential, stating, "There *must* be policies created for the acceptable use of such devices. The users must be educated on what these acceptable uses are."

For some industries, regulatory restrictions and requirements may provide even more reason for developing such a policy. Legislation such as Sarbanes-Oxley, HIPAA, or the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act may require that controls or restrictions are enforced regarding the use of removable storage devices in areas where sensitive or confidential information might be involved.

Enforcing The Policy

When it comes to acceptable use policies for the company network and email systems, your company can use tools and technologies to monitor and police employee compliance. In addition, various logs and content-filtering tools are available to help you keep a watchful eye on employees and weed out those who violate policy.

In many ways, it is much more difficult to guard against the use of removable storage devices or enforce a policy related to removable storage. But that doesn't mean it is impossible. By using Group Policy in Active Directory, or some similar means, you can disable the ability for unauthorized users to use any USB storage devices. For further protection, encrypt and properly secure confidential or sensitive corporate information to avoid unauthorized access.

A Double-Edged Sword

Removable storage devices are very convenient. The ability to simply zap 2GB of data onto a USB flash drive on your keychain and take the files home to work on at night can make some workers more productive. But, like most things that are convenient, they come with a price and, in less ethical hands, can cause significant damage. Take a look at the ways that removable storage devices might be used by certain groups or individuals to work more efficiently but also make sure that not just anyone can walk off with gigabytes of valuable company data.

Key Components For Creating A Removable Storage Policy

If the security threat posed by removable storage devices is enough to compel you to create a policy governing the use of removable storage, here are some key points to include.

- Will USB keys and other small, portable storage devices be allowed at all?
- Will the use of removable storage devices be restricted to certain groups or individuals?
- Will users be required to register or otherwise notify the company that they possess portable storage devices such as USB keys?
- What technologies or controls can your company use to restrict or block the unauthorized use of removable storage devices?
- What penalties or repercussions should be defined for violating the removable storage policy?

Recover Lost Email

Enterprise-Level Systems Help You Get Back What You Lost

by John Brandon

• • •

One day, it will happen. A server will crash, taking down Microsoft Exchange and all the personal folders of every user in the company. Or a virus will destroy the hard disks for a marketing group, and they'll come running to you for help. Email is now at the heart of almost all business productivity, but two enterprise-level systems can help you recover lost messages, archiving them on the fly. Waterford Technologies' MailMeter and NwTech's AfterMail both help you retrieve lost email, compress email message stores, and even eliminate problems related to local Outlook PST file storage.

MailMeter Archive

MailMeter Archive works with either Microsoft Exchange 5.5/2000/2003 or Lotus Notes/Domino Server R5 or higher and the Outlook and Notes clients. Email is compressed and encrypted automatically and then archived. MailMeter Archive can use the mail server or its own server. The system supports all incoming external mail and mail sent between employees. If an email is deleted by accident, you can search by domain, date range, and other variables, and the system supports Boolean, proximity, verb tense, and fuzzy logic searches through its email archives.

"MailMeter is designed for archiving incoming and outgoing email, including attachments," says Thomas Haim, the information technology manager at Krohn & Moss, a Chicago law firm. "For us, it's mainly for the purposes of compliance. It helps with disk space issues, and it frees up room on our Exchange server. There are powerful searching tools—we can search by keyword, subject line, sender, anything."

MailMeter Archive meets various regulations for public companies, healthcare organizations, and financial corporations. Because of the automated storage and end-user support, MailMeter Archive can free IT resources from the hunt and peck method of retrieving lost email and PST archives because all email messages are stored in one central repository instead of on multiple servers or user desktops.

"MailMeter Archive can digitally stamp each incoming message," says Tom Politowski, president of Waterford Technologies. "End users can be given the ability to search for their own email, eliminating quota and .pst problems."

AfterMail

NwTech AfterMail provides similar functionality, including offline server storage, regulatory compliance, and advanced searching. Perhaps the notable difference is that AfterMail uses a highly intuitive Web interface that looks similar to Microsoft Outlook. Instead of supporting Lotus Domino, AfterMail supports Novell GroupWise 6.5.3 in addition to Microsoft Exchange and Windows 2003 server. AfterMail has a slightly more granular approach where users can be granted various levels of security and then save their search profiles and advanced searches locally. AfterMail is intended mostly for companies with up to 5,000 email users.

The Importance Of Recovery

Of course, even with an archiving system installed and running, an overall strategy for recovering deleted email is important. In fact, in IT departments where email is easily archived and deleted email is recoverable, a more time-consuming support issue may arise where end users know they can undelete email just by calling the admin staff. Waterford Technology, for that reason, suggests developing policies for scheduled email recovery so that end users know that deleted email is not accessible anytime they call the help desk.

Another advantage of using an email archiving system is for business knowledge. With one searchable location where all company email is archived, you can easily search for key phrases and business practices and then generate documentation that contains the email text. Support for SQL in both products means database staff can write statements that automatically archive email based on company retention policies (say, email from the previous quarter). This makes the knowledge management capability more useful because you can implement a more robust archive that follows company guidelines for archiving after a set period.

Overall, both packages protect your company from email disasters. Yet it's the searching capability, policy enforcement, and knowledge base functionality that make these recovery tools worth the investment.

Email Recovery Solutions

Here is a breakdown of the main aspects of Waterford Technology's MailMeter Archive and NwTech's AfterMail.

Recovery System	Best Features	Strengths	Standards Compliance	Web Site
Waterford Technology MailMeter Archive	Supports Lotus Domino and Notes Can disallow PST file creation Improves file storage capacities	Email attachment support Fast performance with compression and encryption	Sarbanes-Oxley 2002 SEC-17a HIPAA	www.mailmeter.com
NwTech AfterMail	Supports Novell GroupWise Integrates with Outlook through a Web folder Can save searches as RSS feeds	Intuitive Web interface Relational database search	Sarbanes-Oxley 2002 SEC-17a HIPAA Patriot Act	www.nwtechusa.com

What's Happening

Age-Old Cooling Problem Brought To Its Knees

Is IBM's Cool Blue The Gatorade Of The Enterprise?

by Chris A. MacKinnon

• • •

Heating problems in the data center is old news. Vendors have almost broken their business necks, racing to satisfy global enterprises wanting better solutions for their cooling technique blues. Tons of companies have been sporting watercooling technologies that cool everything down from processors to hard drives. But Alex Yost, director of product management at

IBM, says the company now has something in the watercooler department that will forever change the way data centers keep their cool. "I'm getting several personal calls on this, and folks keep telling me that no one else is doing the same thing."

A Water Weapon

Companies such as NEC and Hitachi are also using watercooling to eradicate the heat that their servers kick out. But for the first time in the history of data center computing, water is being used as a weapon (targeting hot spots and other heating problems) to help keep the entire local data center cooler. Yost says, "IBM has a rich heritage in enterprise cooling. We have used watercooling on several of our products before, but this is the first time that we've used a chilled water system that works in conjunction with already existing air conditioners in the data center."

In July, after three years of homework, IBM made the official announcement about the arrival of Cool Blue (officially known as the eServer Rear Door Heat Exchanger), an innovative, watercooled, heat exchanger door designed to remove heat generated from the back of computer systems before it enters the data center. Cool Blue uses the existing chilled water supply in data center air conditioning systems to reduce server heat emissions by as much as 55%. The Heat Exchanger is an alternative solution to adding more air conditioning units, as well as an inexpensive solution to get at hot spots.

How exactly does the technology work? Yost says, "I like to keep things simple. Cool Blue, in simplistic terms, is a radiator of sorts. Warm air that sits at the back of the server is blown right through the fins, creating cooler air." It is essentially a door, hinged to the back of a rack, housing a water hose that comes up through the floor. Sealed tubes (or fins) filled with chilled water remove more than half of the heat generated in a fully populated rack and then expend it by drawing hot water in so it is not released into the data center. IBM claims the technology can remove up to 50,000 BTU of heat generated by a full server rack.

Beyond Air Conditioning

Some cooling experts trace the evolution of modern data center cooling problems to the industry switch from traditional tower servers to 1U and 2U type servers. The design changeover happened so fast that many data centers failed to retrofit their cooling systems to keep up. Since blade servers arrived on the scene, making locations even more dense, data centers have to look past the age-old air-conditioning units. Watercooling just may be the ticket out of the heat.

IBM claims the technology can remove up to 50,000 BTU of heat generated by a full server rack.

Yost says interest has been generating from the industry and its customers, as well. "This is a very exciting announcement for IBM, and we are already seeing the sense of relief on the faces of our customers who are already using Cool Blue. It's a very simple engineering solution to a heating problem that is getting data center managers vexed. Cool Blue solves this problem in a very simple fashion. It's a magical technology to say the least, and the concept is receiving tons of industry interest."

According to other sources at IBM, however, the technology isn't for every data center, although it can be fitted to any type of server. The company says the technology is most ideal for Intel-centric data centers, especially those hampered by space constraints. Yost claims the technology also helps data centers save on electricity costs by up to 15%.

Although watercooled server racks remain a rare thing in data centers, IBM's move should increase the technology's visibility as a potential solution to heat problems. Though the technology is too new for most experts to tell if it's going to solve the age-old cooling problem, IBM is quite confident that it is the beginning of cooler data centers.

What's Next

Shadow Honeypots

Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University have unveiled a new architecture, expanding traditional IPSes and IDSes by validating unwanted traffic with decoy servers that shadow scans. The new technology combines the best features of traditional honeypots (decoy servers used to research new threats and to lure attackers away from enterprise networks) and anomaly detection systems. Known as shadow honeypots, the decoy/detection systems performed well during initial tests by creating far more accurate detection rates than IPS or IDS alone.

Here's how it works: When sensors detect suspicious activity, the shadow honeypot grabs it for analysis. This immediately reduces the frequency of false positives by the anomaly detection system. The shadow honeypot also randomly checks traffic, which helps increase accuracy and prevent actual attacks from getting into the network. The new technology also promises to better monitor threats that target applications on the client side of computing systems. But watch out for steep computing costs as these honeypots occasionally burned 20% to 50% more processing power, depending on use.

Welcome Merom, Conroe & Woodcrest

Among a recent bombardment of processor announcements from various manufacturers, Intel says it has plans to boost chip power once again. This time the boost will affect enterprise servers, notebooks, and desktops. The new multicore chips, code-named Merom (notebooks), Conroe (desktops), and Woodcrest (servers), will begin to surface in the second half of 2006 and promise greater energy efficiency and better manageability, according to industry sources. The design of these upcoming processors stems mainly from the Pentium M notebook line of chips. The Merom and Conroe chips will differ in cache size, but because they will share similar architectures, they are expected to help streamline some engineering issues for Intel. The company also plans to detail updates on its dual-core chips (code-named Yonah, Presler, and Cedar Mill) that will come out early in 2006. These chips precede Intel's Merom generation consolidation, but they will still be made on the 65nm manufacturing process.

VMware Equals Virtualization

Virtualization of servers and storage is piping hot at a time when IT managers struggle to maintain complex data center infrastructures. VMware, a giant among men in the virtualization industry, has enabled users to run multiple OSes across the same pieces of virtualized hardware. With this aim, the company has recently expanded support for virtualized versions of Linux and the Solaris x86 OSes in its ESX and GSX server products. While the company's expansion comes at a time when vendors are playing up their open source by making their code available to anyone, VMware is resisting the temptation. The company has, however, unveiled plans to give a small number of partners access to its ESX Server source code. But VMware's Senior Director of Strategy Raghu Raghuram says end users won't be sharing in the code windfall. He says that only a select few companies will be given a peek.

NEXT WEEK IN *PROCESSOR* . . .

Coming In Our September 9 Issue:

You frequently hear the phrase information lifecycle management. But what does it mean? And how does a small to midsized enterprise best go about managing its data, no matter where it is? Find out next week.

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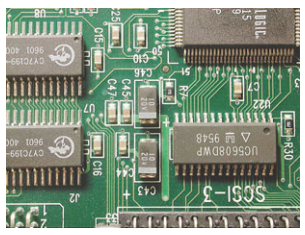

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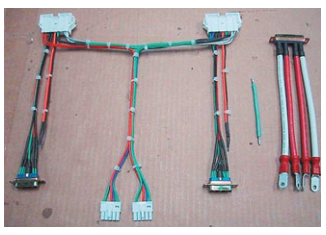

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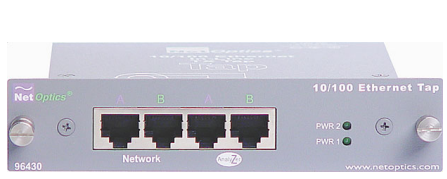

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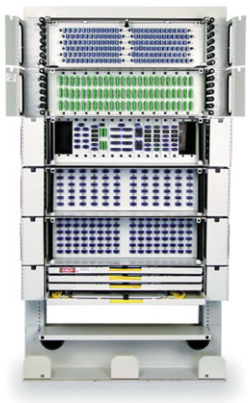

APA Cables & Networks' (APACN) F23 Fiber Distribution System (FDS) is engineered for broadband and enterprise connectivity applications. The FDS consists of termination and splice panels, frames and accessories. The FDS is designed to reduce risk of post installation damage, lower maintenance cost and enhance system life. The F23 144 port fiber panel offers the highest port density in the smallest footprint available.

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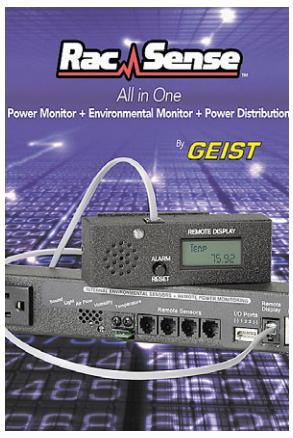

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RLE Technologies
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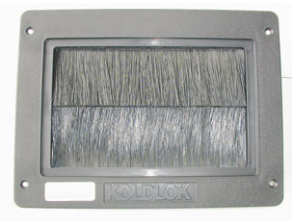
As low as **$70** per unit



The more technology you pack in, the harder it is to keep cool, and hotspots quickly turn into trouble spots. And those uncovered cable openings in the floor dumping pressurized plenum air into the room instead of into your equipment racks aren't helping matters one bit. Seal them up with Koldlok raised **FLOOR GROMMETS** and keep your critical cold air circulating where it belongs.

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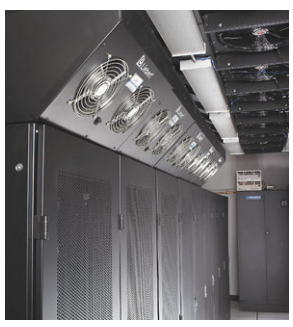

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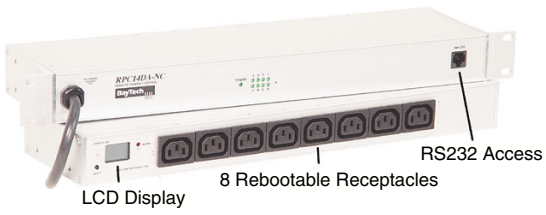

8 RECEPTACLE POWER CONTROL AND MONITORING

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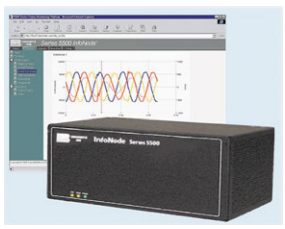

The Signature System™ is an integrated, Web-browser-based platform that allows users to remotely--and in real time--monitor their power systems. A modular power quality and energy management tool, the Signature System is successfully used by data centers, mission-critical facilities, and banking/financial institutions around the world.
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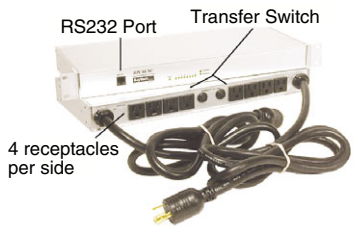

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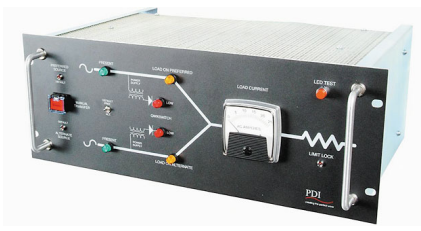

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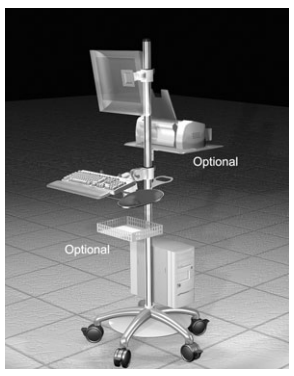

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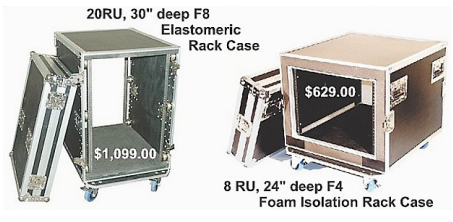

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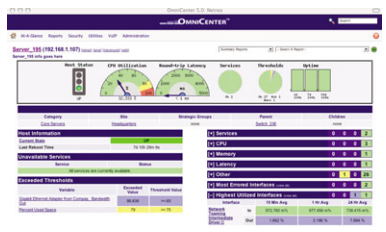

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The CopperCom CSX is an RUS listed, next generation switching system that provides Class 4, Class 5 and IP Services. With a complete set of features including residential CLASS and custom calling features, business group, CALEA, LNP and centrex, the CSX is the perfect solution for service expansion or legacy switch replacement. For additional information, visit this page:

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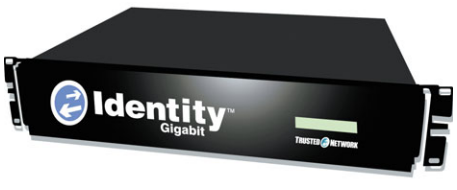

Enabling the Identity-Driven Enterprise
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Alpharetta, GA 30022
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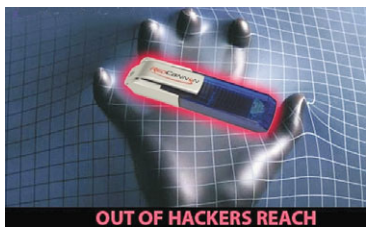

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East Hanover, NJ 07936
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RMC3S2-XP

-3U
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-2U
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RMC3K2-XP

-3U
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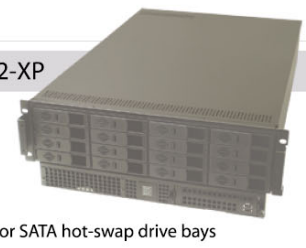
RMC4K2-XP

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DCB

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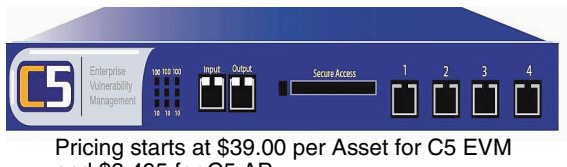

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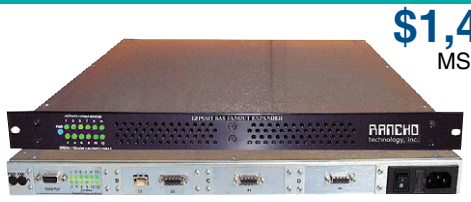

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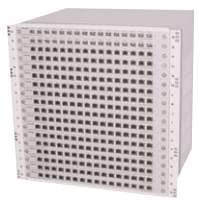

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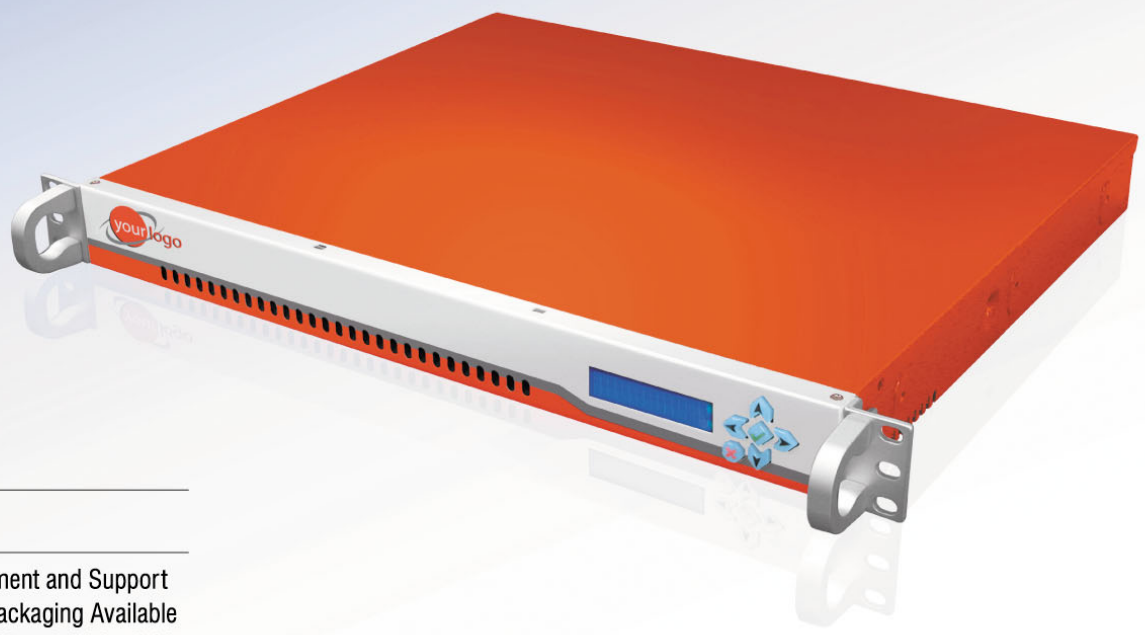

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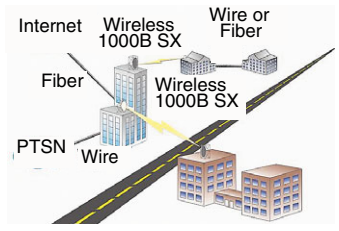

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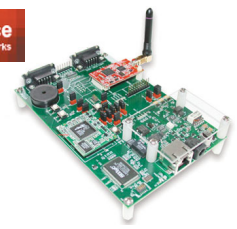

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Computer and network equipment is designed to operate within a very specific range of temperatures. Basically, if your data center rises above 85º F, you’re cooking your hardware and increasing the risk of failure. Unsure... just ask IBM, HP, Dell, APC or Liebert. The bottom line is that you need to know immediately when temperature problems arise because recovery is simply too expensive.

“25% of all data centers experience downtime more than 5 times a year... 60% of these last more than a half day.”

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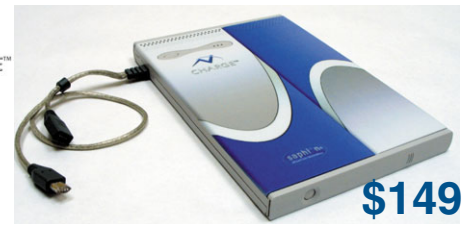

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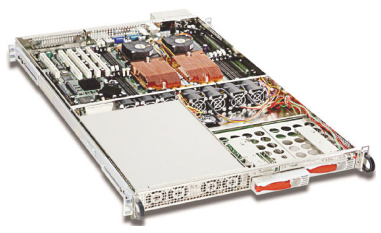

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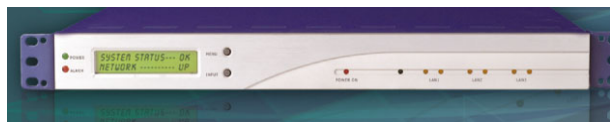

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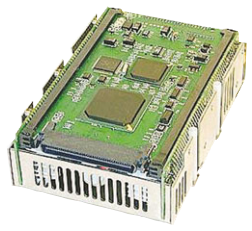

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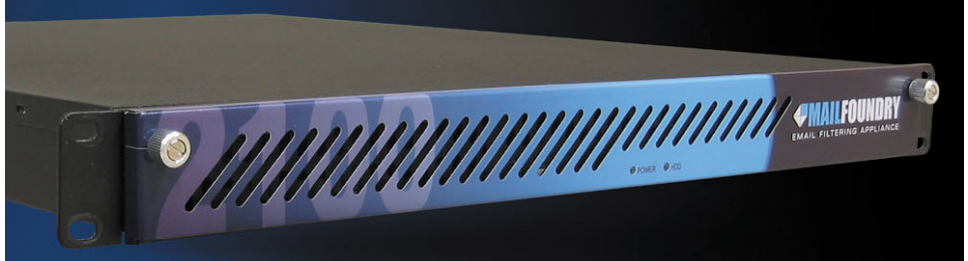

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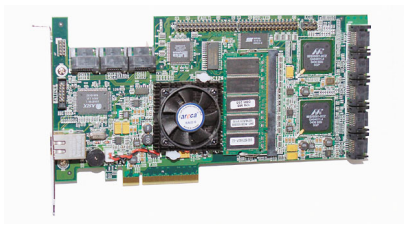

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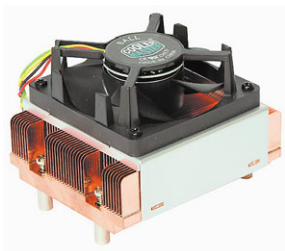

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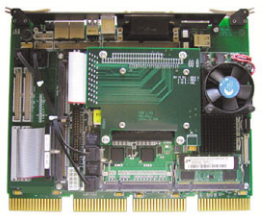

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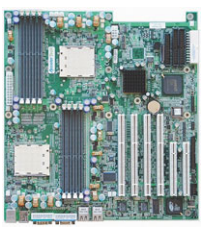

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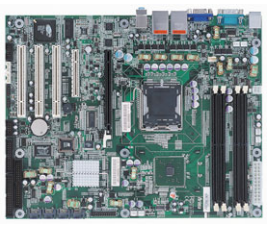

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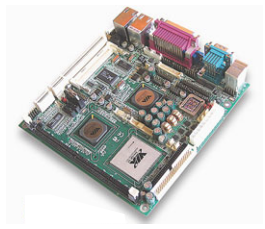

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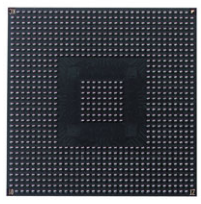

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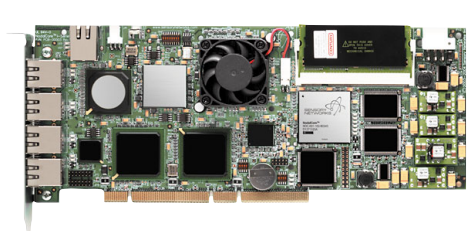

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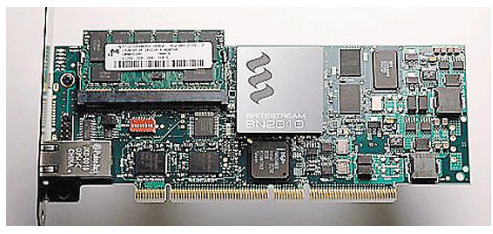

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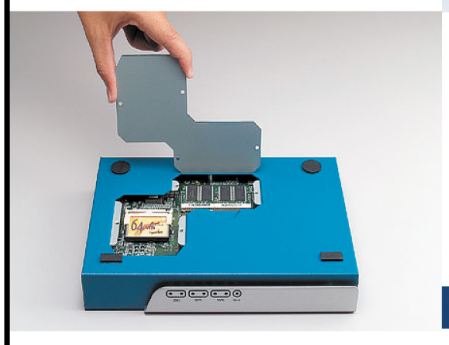

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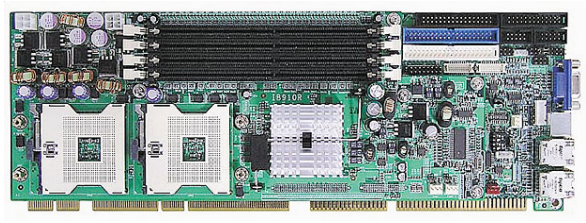

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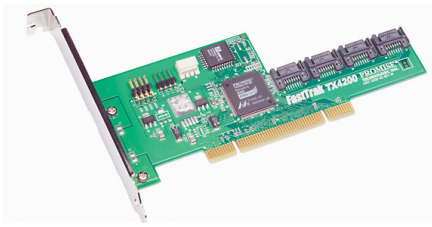

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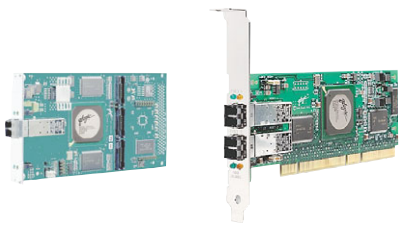

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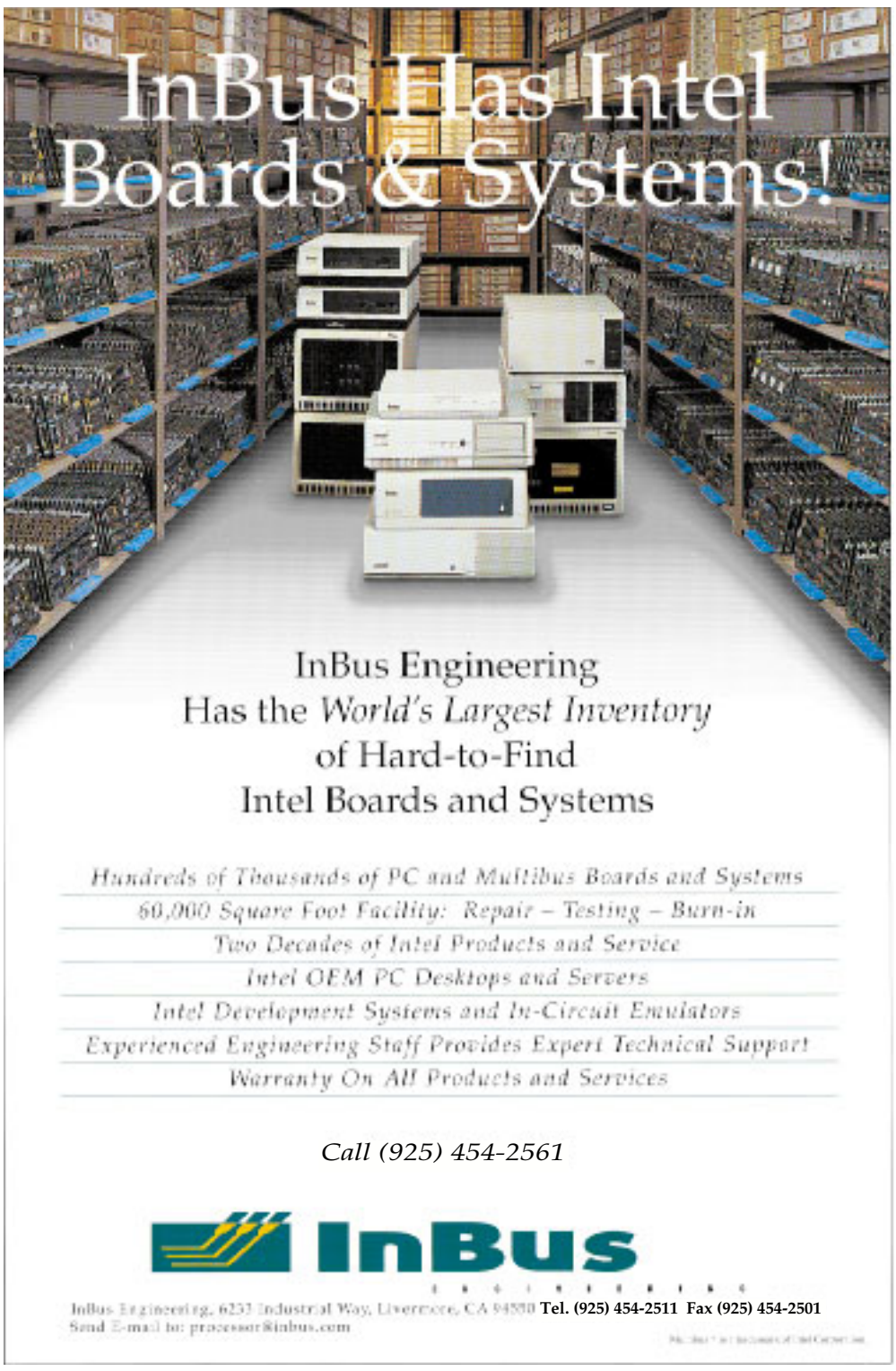

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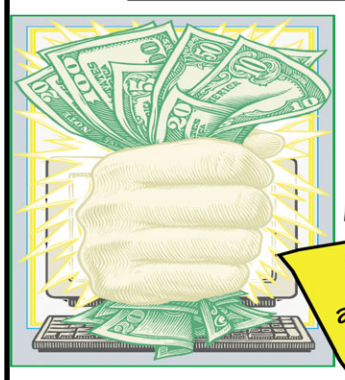

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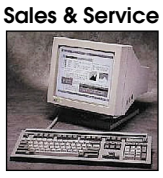

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